



WORK AND WIN

AN INTERESTING WEEKLY FOR YOUNG AMERICA.

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No. 2.

NEW YORK, DECEMBER 16, 1898.

Price 5 Cents.



FRED FEARNOT,
DETECTIVE;
—OR—
BALKING
A
DESPERATE GAME.
BY
AUTHOR OF 'FRED FEARNOT.'

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CHAPTER I.

THE ROBBERY OF THE BANK AS AVON—FRED FEARNOT GOES WITH THE SHERIFF.

"THEY have a good start of us."

"Yes, at least eight hours."

"If they caught the morning train going West at sunrise, this morning, they will get away."

"Of course, but as it was a very dark night they may not have reached the train in time."

"When does the next train pass?"

"At about two in the afternoon, I believe."

"Well, we may find out something from the ticket agent. He doesn't sell so many tickets but what he can remember who the purchasers were."

"He probably doesn't sell a dozen tickets a day," remarked one of the party of four men and a youth, about eighteen years of age, who were riding along the road that led from the town of Avon to the village of Dupont, twenty miles away.

They were riding briskly, a tall, elderly man in the lead, with the youth alongside of him.

On the night before, the Bank of Avon was mysteriously robbed of a large sum of money, bonds and securities. The only clue to the robbers was a discovery made about midnight by a youth of the name of Fred Fearnot, who was returning to the academy from visiting friends in the town. Soon after passing the bridge that spanned the river, which separated the academy grounds from the town, young Fearnot heard a horse whinny in the bushes close by the roadside.

His curiosity was excited, and he fearlessly entered the woods to find out whose horse it was in there at that late hour.

Very much to his surprise, he found a horse there hitched to a buggy.

His curiosity was aroused to such a pitch that he made up his mind to wait there and see who came for the horse.

He remained there nearly an hour, at the end of

which time two men came up and led the horse out into the road.

Out in the starlight he recognized one of the men by a heavy bushy beard he wore, having passed him standing in front of the Bank of Avon.

As they got into the buggy, Fred heard one of the men say:

"It's only twenty miles to Dupont, and we can easily catch the train which passes there at sunrise."

"Yes," returned the other, "we can make it if we don't collide with anything in the dark."

"Oh, it's a good enough road, and I guess the horse knows enough to keep in the middle of it."

With that they drove off and young Fearnot continued on his way to the academy, wondering why the horse and buggy had been concealed in the woods, on the outskirts of the town.

"It seems to me," said he to himself, "a rather queer proceeding, but it is no business of mine."

Early the next morning the whole town was startled with the news that the bank had been robbed. One of the employees at the academy, who lived over in the town, brought the news to the household of the professor, and in a few minutes all the students had heard it.

"By George!" exclaimed young Fearnot, "I'll wager my ears that those two men in that buggy had something to do with it; and I am going to run over there and tell the authorities about it."

Getting leave of absence from the professor, Fred hurried over the river and made his way to the bank. There he found Mr. Cushman, the president of the bank, with quite a number of citizens and two officers about him, trying to solve the mystery of the robbery. Making his way to his side, Fred tapped him on the arm, saying:

"Mr. Cushman, let me see you in private a few minutes, please."

The bank president turned, looked at him keenly,

and remarked: "What do you wish to see me about? I am very busy just now."

"I wish to tell you what I know about this thing, sir."

"Ah! Do you know anything about it?"

"I don't know that I do, sir. But I found out something last night that may have some connection with it."

"Then come into the private office here," and the president led the way to a little room back of the vault, where he sat down by a desk and motioned Fred to seat himself in a chair nearby.

Fred sat down in the chair and told his story.

Mr. Cushman was startled. He reached out and grasped Fred's hand, saying: "I think I know you, young man. I believe you have had drafts cashed here."

"Yes, sir," replied Fred, "my name is Fred Fearnot, and I am a student at Avon Academy."

"Yes, yes," assented Mr. Cushman, "I recollect you now. Just keep your seat, please," and he arose from his seat and stepped around into the main office, where he summoned two of the men, with whom he returned to where Fred was awaiting him. One of the men who accompanied him was the sheriff of the county, while the other was a constable.

"Now, young man, please tell the sheriff what you have just told me," said the banker, as he resumed his seat.

Fred repeated his story to the two officers, after which the sheriff remarked:

"They are the robbers, sir."

"I think so, too," assented Cushman; "and now, Mr. Sheriff, on my personal responsibility I offer a reward of ten thousand dollars for their capture and conviction."

"Very good, sir," returned the sheriff. "I will do my best to capture them," and then laying his hand on Fred's shoulder, added:

"Now, young man, I want you to go with me to Dupont. Can you do so?"

"Yes, sir," answered Fred.

"Very well, then. We'll be off in ten minutes. Constable! Go and get Bill Saunders and Tom Malone. I want them to go with us. Bring them to the livery stable at once, where we will meet them."

The constable hurried away to do the bidding of the sheriff, while that officer and Fred repaired at once to the livery stable to procure horses for the party of five.

Ten minutes later the party, well mounted and armed, rode across the bridge on their way towards Dupont. As they passed the spot where Fred had seen the horse and buggy the night before, he stopped and showed them where he stood when the two men came up and took possession of it. The track of the horse and wheels were clearly perceptible.

The party rode briskly forward along the Dupont road, keeping a strict watch for the trail of the horse and buggy. As a matter of course the trail was soon

lost among the innumerable tracks made by other vehicles.

"There is no use looking for the trail," remarked Fred to the sheriff, "because it is impossible to recognize it in the road-bed. What we want to do is to push on to Dupont as fast as possible."

"I guess you are right," assented the sheriff, and the party hastened on, reaching the village with their horses covered with foam, having made the distance inside of three hours. It was then near noon.

"Now, Mr. Sheriff," said Fred, "I am no detective, but it strikes me we should not excite the curiosity of anybody in the village by dashing up to the railroad station and hurling questions at the ticket agent. If they reached here in time to catch the morning train, they are off. If they didn't catch it, they must be about here somewhere, and in that case they would take the alarm and skip out again if we dashed up to the depot in a body."

"Blest if you are not right!" said the sheriff, impressed by the youth's logic.

"Yes," added the constable, "I think the best thing for us to do is to scatter and let just one of us go to the station and find out about it."

"That's it!" said Fred; "I'll go to the station, while the rest of you scatter about the village, one going to the post-office, another to the drug store, another to the hotel, and so on. When I have found out about them at the station I will walk up to the post-office and report."

"All right," said the sheriff, "go ahead. There is the station over on the left," and he pointed in the direction of the little depot as he spoke.

Fred rode straight for the depot, while the other four took different streets and quietly made their way to the places agreed upon.

As Fred approached the depot, he saw the place was pretty well deserted. He dismounted, hitched his horse, and quietly made his way to the railroad, where a railroad employee was moving some boxes with a truck.

"When does the next train leave here, going west?" he asked of the employee.

"At two o'clock, sir," replied the man, scarcely looking up at him.

Fred quietly looked at his watch, and remarked:

"Then I'll have to wait a couple of hours."

"Yes, sir," said the other, moving a large box up to the farther end of the platform.

Fred strolled about the place and entered the waiting-room, where he made the discovery that the ticket office was closed and the ticket agent nowhere in sight. Strolling out to the platform again, he looked around and saw, about two hundred yards above the station, a switch engine shifting two or three freight cars. He watched the two or three men in sight some ten or fifteen minutes, as though he had nothing else to do at the time. Then he turned his attention to the man who was moving the boxes on the platform, occasionally addressing a remark to him as

he passed. Finally the man stopped, wiped the perspiration from his face, and asked Fred:

"Which way are you going, sir?"

"I'm going west," was the reply, "provided two friends who are to join me here arrive in time. We intended to meet here, to catch the morning train, but I was delayed."

"Two men did leave on the morning train, going west," said the man.

"The deuce you say!" exclaimed Fred, "did they come in a buggy?"

"They may have come to town in a buggy, but they didn't drive up to the station here."

"Did you see them?" Fred asked.

"Yes, sir," was the reply.

"Did one of them have a heavy beard?"

"No, sir," and the man shook his head negatively, "they were both clean shaven except mustaches."

"All right, then," Fred remarked, "I guess my friends were late as well as myself," and with that he strolled off up into the village in quest of the other members of his party.

"They didn't catch the train," said Fred to himself, as he walked up the street; "they must have missed their way somewhere and got into the wrong road, and I guess if we wait for them they will turn up here some time during the day. Say, boy! Where is the post-office here?" and he stopped a little twelve-year old urchin, who promptly pointed in the direction of the village post-office, with the remark:

"Right up the street there."

"Thank you," said Fred, as he continued his way in the direction indicated by the boy.

On reaching the post-office, he found the sheriff standing in front of the store in which the office was, talking with a couple of citizens. He passed by without speaking to him, to avoid making the impression on the minds of the two citizens that he was of the sheriff's party.

A few minutes later the sheriff followed him and soon overtook him.

"They haven't arrived yet," said Fred.

"Good," returned the sheriff. "We'll catch them."

"Where's the livery stable?" asked Fred.

"Over on another street. We put up our horses there. I'll go 'round with you," and the two walked away together and soon reached the stable, where they found the constable awaiting them.

"They haven't arrived yet, constable," said the sheriff, in a low tone of voice.

"Well, somebody came here this morning from Avon in a buggy and in time to catch the train, too."

"Eh!" said the sheriff, "are you sure of that?"

"Yes," was the reply, "the horse and buggy are in the stable here now, and they are to be sent back to Avon to-morrow morning."

"I want to see that horse," remarked Fred.

"Would you know him?" the sheriff asked.

"Yes; he has a white spot as big as a pocket hand-

kerchief on his right flank. I recollect seeing it plainly when he was led out into the road last night."

"That's the horse!" gasped the constable, "I have seen him in the stall. He belongs to Morgan, who runs the little stable down at the foot of Hill street."

The sheriff looked at Fred inquiringly. But the latter turned to the constable and asked him to show him the horse. The constable turned and entered the stable, making his way to a stall at the farther end. There he pointed to a horse which Fred instantly recognized as the one he had seen the night before.

"That's the horse," he asserted, "but I learned at the depot that two men took the west-bound train this morning, neither of whom wore a beard, and that's why I got the idea that they had not reached here."

CHAPTER II.

FRED GOES ON THE TRAIL OF THE BANK ROBBERS AND MAKES A DISCOVERY.

AFTER taking another good look at the horse Fred, the sheriff and the constable left the livery stable and held a consultation in front of it, out on the street. By this time the sheriff had conceived quite an admiration for the sagacity of the young student.

"Well, what next?" he asked of Fred.

"We must find out," was the reply, "what sort of fellows they were who left their horse and buggy here. Neither of the men who took the train this morning had a beard. Now, we want to find out whether one of them, who left his horse here, did wear a beard."

"That's right," said the sheriff, "and as the constable has already talked with the stableman you had better let him inquire."

The stableman was at work in the yard back of the stable. The constable went out and said to him:

"See here, my man, I know that horse that was left here this morning belongs to a friend of mine at Avon. Can you tell me whether or not one of the men wore a heavy beard?"

"Neither one of them had a beard, sir," replied the stableman, "but had mustaches."

"Then I don't know them," said the constable, turning away and rejoining the sheriff, to whom he reported what he had learned.

"Then it was a false beard," said Fred, "which he pulled off before reaching here. So they caught the train and got away. Now, we want to see the ticket agent and find out to what point they bought tickets. I will go back down to the depot, and if he has not returned I will hunt him up."

"All right," said the sheriff, "go ahead; we'll wait for you."

Fred returned to the depot and not finding the ticket agent there, inquired of the man at work on the platform where he lived. On getting the information he repaired to the residence of the ticket agent, where he was told by his wife that he was somewhere out in the village, adding:

"You will probably find him at the barber's."

"Thank you, madam," said he, bowing and turning away.

Knowing that a village of that size could not support but one barber shop, he inquired for that place and soon found it. On entering he found the barber quietly dozing in his chair.

He sprang up and bowed to the prospective customer, as he stood waiting for him to take a seat.

"I don't wish to be shaved, sir," Fred said. "I am trying to find the ticket agent, and was told that I might catch him here."

"I shaved him half an hour ago, sir," the barber replied. "I think you will find him at the grocery on the corner below here."

"Thank you, sir," and the young student stepped out and strolled down to the corner, where he found a half dozen men sitting around, talking.

"I am looking for the ticket agent," he called out, and one of the men arose to his feet with the remark:

"That's me."

"Glad to see you, sir," said Fred. "I was down to the depot and found everybody out."

"There's no train till two o'clock," said the agent.

"Yes, that's what I was told; but I would like to see you on a little business before the train arrives."

"All right," said the agent, walking out with him to the sidewalk; "what can I do for you?"

"You can probably give me a little information. I want to find out if two men took the west-bound train this morning."

"Yes, sir," was the reply.

"Can you tell me to what point they bought tickets?"

"Yes; I sold them tickets for Elmira."

"Do you remember how the men looked?"

"Yes; one had a black mustache and the other a reddish brown one, and both wore sack coats and derby hats."

"Thank you, sir," returned Fred; "I want to overtake them," and he pulled out his watch to note the time of day.

"It's over an hour yet before the next train passes here."

"Yes," assented Fred. "Will it go straight through to Elmira?"

"Oh, yes."

"Can you tell me what time their train reached Elmira this morning?"

"Yes, it was due there at ten o'clock."

"Thank you! Can you tell me if any other trains have left Elmira up to this hour, after ten o'clock?"

"There are a good many trains passing through Elmira," said the agent, "but I know very little about their time-table."

Fred again thanked him, and turned away to re-join the sheriff and constable, to whom he told what he had learned.

"Well, they have got away," remarked the sheriff.

"Yes, for the present," assented Fred, "but I believe I can catch them."

"You do, eh?"

"Yes, sir. If all five of us went to Elmira the news would be out that the sheriff from Avon was hot on the trail of the bank robbers, but if you four return to Avon, they will probably hear that you have abandoned the pursuit, and never think of suspecting that a boy like myself was on their trail."

"I guess you are right," returned the sheriff.

"Have you money enough with you to go to Elmira?"

"Yes, but I may need more."

"Then here's fifty dollars, which Mr. Cushman handed me for expenses. Take it, and I will report to him that I turned it over to you."

"Thank you," said Fred, as he took the money. "I will telegraph you every day what I am doing. Hadn't you better give me some sort of written document to show to the police of Elmira, or any other place, if I should need assistance in making an arrest."

"Yes, yes," said the sheriff; "I never thought of that. I'll make you one of my deputies and that will hold good anywhere in the State."

"Just the thing," said Fred, and they repaired to a store nearby, where they secured pen, ink and paper. The sheriff promptly wrote out a commission for Fred Fearnot, making him one of his deputies at Avon, which he handed to the young student, after which they again went out upon the street, where the sheriff remarked to the constable:

"I guess we may as well go back to Avon and wait till we hear from our young friend."

"Yes," assented the constable, "that's all we can do. I'll hunt up Bill and Tom and tell them about it."

The three joined the other two, and went down to the depot, where they remained until the west-bound train came in.

Fred bought a thicket, shook hands with them, and got aboard. A minute or two later the train moved on, and the sheriff and his party took charge of Fred's horse, to lead him back to Avon.

Fred took a seat behind a very pretty young woman, and as the train whirled past farms, houses and villages, he gave himself up to a good deal of hard thinking, and for half an hour or so he seemed like one lost in deep thought.

He was a handsome youth, with a face expressive of a great deal of character. He had the air of one with great determination, and a purpose in view.

A newsboy came through the car from whom he bought a paper, as did the young lady in front of him. He opened it and proceeded to read. It was difficult, however, for him to take any interest in what he saw in the paper, so he soon folded it up and put it in his pocket.

"I'm in for it," he said to himself, "playing detective after a couple of desperate villains, and I guess I've got to be pretty sharp to avoid running up against a snag. That fellow with the beard recognized me last night, as I passed him in front of the

Bank of Avon, and would be sure to know me again anywhere we should meet. I am satisfied he is the same man who robbed old man Andrews, the farmer who lives two miles above the academy. I helped the old fellow catch him, with his pal, and peppered him with bird shot. So I have no reason to expect that he bears me any particular fraternal feeling. Still, for all that, I don't think I will get up any disguise."

Just then he saw the young woman in front of him attempt to raise the window at her side. She was unable to do so and turning around asked him to open it for her.

"Certainly," said he, springing up; and leaning over the back of her seat, raised the window.

"Thank you," she said, "it is very close in here."

"Yes," replied he, "I was noticing that, myself."

By and by she asked him if he knew what village it was the train was passing through at the time.

"No," he replied, "I do not, but I can find out on the time-table," and he referred to the time-table, which he drew from his pocket. On finding it he gave her the name of the village, which was then a mile or so behind him.

"Do you know what time we will reach Elmira?" she asked.

"About five o'clock, I believe. I am going there myself."

"Do you live there?" she asked.

"No; I belong in New York."

He thought it best not to mention Avon at all.

"Do you live in Elmira?" he asked her.

"No, I live in Philadelphia and am going to Elmira to meet my husband. Are you acquainted there?"

"No," he replied; "I am going up on a little business that may not keep me more than one day."

"What business are you in?" she asked.

"Oh, I am not in business. Just a little matter to be attended to for my father."

"What is your name?" she asked.

Quick as a flash the thought occurred to him that he had better not tell her his name, as she might repeat it to her husband or others on reaching Elmira, where he expected to find the robber who bore no particular love for the name of Fearnot.

"My name is Wallace," said he.

"Oh, I know a family of that name in Philadelphia," she remarked. "Have you any relatives there?"

"No, I think not," he replied, "but I understand there are quite a number of Wallaces living there."

They chatted pleasantly for some time. He found the young woman disposed to be very social, with fine conversational powers and a very winning way about her.

"My husband frequently goes to New York," she said, "and I would like very much to have you meet him."

"Is he to meet you at the train?" Fred asked.

"I don't know. He telegraphed me to meet him there and to go to the Mohawk House. So if he doesn't meet me at the train I will go there and wait

for him. He is a tall, handsome man, with a reddish brown mustache. I have his picture here," and she opened a little satchel that was suspended from her belt and took out a photograph which she showed him.

On seeing the face Fred gave a sudden start. He looked at it scrutinizingly for nearly a minute.

If it wasn't the face of the man he was looking for, it was near enough like him to be a twin brother.

"The face looks very familiar to me," he remarked, as he held the photograph out before him.

"He travels about a great deal," she remarked, as she took the photograph and restored it to the little satchel. "It is possible you may have met him."

When the train reached Elmira Fred was puzzled whether or not he should escort her out of the car. He feared if he did so he might run up face to face with the man and thus lose an opportunity to have him arrested before his presence in Elmira became known to him. With that idea in his mind, just before the train stopped, he rose from his seat, went to the farther end of the car, and peered through the window as if eagerly watching for someone. A glance back at the young woman assured him that she, too, was on the lookout for her husband, and hence had not probably noticed his lack of attention to her. He was the first one to leave the car, and as there were many people on the platform of the station he mingled among them and eagerly watched the young woman as she alighted.

As she stepped off the car she looked inquiringly around at the crowd, and seemed a bit disappointed at not seeing someone for whom she was looking. He kept well out of her way to avoid being seen by her, and after the train passed on followed her to the Mohawk House, where he noticed her making inquiry at the clerk's desk at the time she registered. The clerk nodded his head to her in response to inquiries, and then summoned a hall boy to show her to her room.

As soon as she disappeared up the stairway, Fred went to the desk and registered the name of Frederick Wallace, New York.

"I have no baggage with me," he remarked to the clerk, "as I am here for a day or two only and will pay you in advance. What are your rates?"

"Two dollars a day," replied the clerk.

Whereupon Fred paid him two dollars and was assigned to a room.

Whilst waiting at the desk he looked at the name the young woman had registered, and found it to be:

"MISTRESS JOHN HOPPING, Philadelphia."

"I guess that is an assumed name," he thought to himself.

"Do you wish to go to your room now, sir?" the clerk asked.

"Yes, if you please," he replied, and he was shown up to the room, and found it nearly opposite the one that had been assigned to the lady.

As soon as he entered he threw off his coat and

vest and collar in order to bathe his face and hands and get off some of the dust of traveling.

"That fellow will be here some time during the evening," he said, "and I am going to watch out for him."

So he hurried through his ablutions and went down again into the office of the hotel. There he saw people coming and going, for the place seemed to be quite popular with the public.

CHAPTER III.

"NOW BRING ON YOUR FRECKLES."

DOWN in the office of the hotel Fred paced to and fro, looking around him with the air of one who had no particular interest in anything thereabout. He saw several others come in and register and were assigned to rooms in different parts of the house. Several times he walked by the desk and glanced over the register, and finally saw that the clerk noticed it.

He nodded to the clerk and placed his finger on the name of Hopping, on the register, and asked if Mr. John Hopping had arrived.

"No," answered the clerk, "he will probably come in on the next train."

"Will you kindly let me know when he arrives?"

"Yes," replied the clerk. "Shall I tell him you wish to see him?"

"No, I had rather surprise him myself."

"All right, sir," and the clerk turned to answer a question asked him by someone else.

Fred walked away and finally found a chair off a little distance, out of the way of people passing to and fro.

He sat astride the chair with his arms resting on the back of it, as though sitting for a photographer, but he was playing a deep, deep game.

For more than one hour he sat there, silent and motionless as a statue, gazing at every man who entered or left the house.

Suddenly he saw a man enter and go straight up to the desk. From where he sat he could see it was the man for whom he was looking, the original of the picture in the possession of the woman whom he had met on the train. He saw him register his name and then go up the stairs.

Fred quietly arose from his seat, strolled up to the desk, and found there registered the name of "John Hopping," opposite which was marked the same room occupied by Mrs. John Hopping.

"Your man has arrived, sir," remarked the clerk.

"Yes, I see," returned Fred. "Do you know how long he is going to stop here?"

"No," and the clerk shook his head.

Fred turned away, and asked one of the hall boys where the nearest hat store was.

"Right around the corner, sir," replied the boy.

A few minutes later, Fred strolled out in a leisurely way and then hurried around the corner. Entering the hat store, he said to a salesman:

"I want a soft-brimmed slouch hat."

"Here you are, sir," replied the salesman, produc-

ing several kinds of slouch hats. He tried on a half dozen of them, and finally selected one which fitted him rather loosely, paid for it, kept it on his head, and had the old one wrapped up. Then he returned to the hotel, went up to his room, and surveyed himself in the mirror, with the new hat pulled well down over his eyes.

"I don't think he will recognize me with this on," he remarked to himself, "unless he took particular notice of me. I'll risk it, anyway," and he turned and left the room, making his way leisurely down the stairs to the main office again.

There he took his stand near the clerk's desk, in order to get a closer look at Hopping, if he should come down again. A few minutes after he took that position two men came in, each bringing a valise, as though they had just arrived on some train. They set their valises on the floor, in front of the clerk's desk, and one of them took the pen offered him by the clerk, to register his name. Before putting his name down, the man remarked to his companion:

"He is here, Ed."

"Of course," assented the other, who a few moments later registered his own name under that of the other as "Ed Hollis, New York," and as soon as he had done so, he asked the clerk:

"Can you give us rooms near that of Mr. Hopping?"

The clerk turned and looked at his list of vacant rooms for a few moments, and remarked:

"Yes, but not on the same side of the corridor."

"Well, that will do," said Hollis.

The clerk then assigned them rooms, one on each side of that occupied by Fred Fearnot. A hall boy was summoned, and the two were shown up to their rooms.

Fred was thinking harder than ever before in his life. Two men had arrived, who had evidently expected to meet Hopping and his wife there. He was not absolutely certain that Hopping was the man he wanted to see, but he made up his mind to satisfy himself fully on that point at every hazard.

"They will come down to supper," he thought to himself, "and then I will get a good, square look at him."

Another hour was spent near the clerk's desk, where he could see people ascending or descending the stairs, and was finally rewarded by seeing Mrs. Hopping descending the stairs, accompanied by the man whose photograph she had shown him.

As they passed under the chandelier Fred pulled his slouch hat well down over his eyes and moved up within three feet of the man. Then he turned away suddenly and made his way to the front entrance of the hotel, where he stood on the steps and pushed his hat back on his head in a proper position.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed, in an undertone; "he is the very man who made his escape from old Farmer Andrews and myself two months ago, when we arrested him and two others for robbery. I am satisfied on that point, but the only clew I have to

his being one of the bank robbers is the remark he made as he passed me last night, which was: 'There goes the boy with the shot-gun! I am laying for him!' He then wore a big, bushy beard. Now he has no beard at all. I can go to the police and show my authority as a deputy sheriff and have him arrested; but unless we can find some of the plunder taken from the bank in his possession he would soon be turned loose again, unless I brought the charge against him of robbing old man Andrews. I guess I'd better wait awhile and see what I can find out, as two other men have joined him, who may possibly be of the same stripe."

Fred dared not enter the supper-room until after Hopping and his friend had left it, as he would have to remove his slouch hat, which would enable Hopping and his wife to recognize him at a glance. She was so pleasant with him on the train that he was satisfied she would bow and smile to him, if she saw him in the dining-room, and thus draw the attention of the three men to him.

He waited until they came out and then went in and ate his supper. On coming out again he found that all four had returned to their room; but he remained down-stairs until a late hour.

Finally the thought occurred to him that he couldn't watch all night and all day, too; so he made up his mind to provide against the parties leaving without his knowledge. By inquiring of one of the hall boys he found out which one of the employees would have to call up guests who wanted to leave on any of the late trains, and found that he was a young fellow, about his own age. He went to him and said:

"I believe you are on night duty here, are you not?"

"Yes," replied the employee.

"Well, see here, I want you to do me a favor. My room is No. 34. There are parties in 35, 32 and 36 whom I want to keep up with. If any of them leave on the late or early trains, I want you to call me up at the same time that you call them."

"All right, sir," said the fellow.

"Well, here's a dollar for you; and I want you to be careful to say nothing about it to anybody."

The young fellow took the dollar and quickly transferred it to his own pocket.

Fred was quick to perceive that he was on the make every time and willing to render any service for pay; a fact which he did not forget.

Having provided against losing the trail, Fred quietly went up-stairs to his room. When he reached his door he noticed that there were no lights in the rooms on either side of his own, but there was a light in room 35, which was occupied by the Hoppings. He heard voices in there, and after listening a minute or so was satisfied that the man, Hollis, and his companion were in there with the Hoppings.

Entering his room Fred sat down by the door, leaving it ajar just a couple of inches, and sat there in the dark for nearly an hour. His patience was finally re-

warded by hearing the door open opposite his and saw the light stream out across the corridor. A peep revealed to him the Hoppings and their two visitors.

"Yes," he heard Hopping say, "we've got to stay here till we hear from them if it takes a week."

"But can we afford to do so?" he heard Hollis ask.

"Yes, I think so, as everything is well covered up."

"We can't be too careful," said Hollis, shaking his head, "but I hope we will hear from them tomorrow," and with that they passed out into the corridor and Hopping closed the door of his room. Fred heard the other two go to their respective rooms to the right and left of his, after which he closed his own door and quietly retired to bed.

"They are waiting for somebody," he said to himself, "so I guess there is no danger of their leaving during the night. They are a gang of thieves who are plotting some kind of a game, and I guess I had better set my wits to work to find out what it is. If Hopping himself was out of the way it wouldn't be so difficult, but the moment he recognizes me he will skip out and probably the entire gang will follow him. He knows that I could have him arrested for the Andrews robbery and carried back to Avon, where the old man and I could swear to his identity. I guess I will have to work up a disguise of some kind tomorrow so as to avoid the danger of being recognized."

He arose early and found that the night employees were still on duty. The one to whom he had paid a dollar to call him up, came up and informed him that the other parties were still there.

"All right," he said, "keep your eyes open, and let me know anything you can find out about them."

The Hoppings and their friends slept late, as Fred saw nothing of them until near noon. He availed himself of the opportunity to go out into the city, in quest of a costumer. He soon found one, a Frenchman and his wife, who carried on the business of getting up various kinds of costumes and disguises for masquerade balls. He went in and told the proprietor that he was in quest of some kind of a disguise that would conceal his identity from even intimate acquaintances.

The Frenchman scanned his features very closely for a few minutes, as if studying up the possible effect of certain changes in his facial expression.

"Do you wish it for day or night use?" he asked Fred.

"Both," was the reply.

"Then, a false mustache won't do, for that could be detected in daylight."

"Well, fix me up the best way you can."

"If you will have your hair cut short I can fit you nicely with a wig of red hair and scatter freckles all over your face, that would look so natural that your own mother wouldn't know you."

"How long would the freckles stay on?" Fred asked.

"They will wear off in about a week, unless renewed."

"How are they put on?" Fred asked.

"By a brush dipped in a little brownish fluid," replied the Frenchman; "the skin absorbs it and neither soap or water has any effect on it."

"Is it painful?" Fred asked.

"Not in the least, monsieur."

"And you say they will gradually wear off within a week?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"What will it cost?" Fred asked.

"Ten dollars, monsieur."

"Let's have it, then," ordered Fred, and the Frenchman led him into a little back room of his establishment, where his wife, a vivacious French matron, deftly removed his locks with a pair of shears. Several wigs were then tried on, until one was found to fit to his scalp as nicely as though it was a natural growth of red hair.

Fred had to smile as he looked at his reflection in the mirror, and mentally resolved to work up a little fun when he got back to the academy.

"It's all right," he said to the Frenchman. "Now come on with your freckles."

The Frenchman seized a small brush, which he dipped into a bottle of dark, brownish fluid, and applied it to Fred's face in various places between the top of his forehead and chin. He even placed a few on the side of his neck, after which he touched up the back of his hands.

"Now, look again, monsieur," said the Frenchman, and Fred again laughed at himself in the mirror.

"Great Scott" he laughed, as he saw the transformation; "my father would kick me out of the house if I went home claiming to be his boy; and I'm sure the professor at the academy would have me thrown out if I returned there claiming to be Fred Fearnot."

He paid the Frenchman ten dollars, and walked out upon the street so thoroughly transformed that he no longer entertained the least fear of recognition at the hands of Hopping or of his wife.

As his day was up at the hotel, he returned there and registered under the name of "Fred Harris," and was assigned a room beyond that one occupied by Hollis; but as he had the key to his former room in his pocket, he went in there and secured his derby hat, which he carried into the other.

"Now, I'm all right," he said, "and will pay my room rent daily, whilst waiting for the Hoppings to make a move."

Down in the office of the hotel, a little after noon, he bought a paper, and the first thing he saw was an account of the robbery of the Bank of Avon, which contained a good deal of sensational matter. His own name was mentioned as having gone to Dupont with the sheriff's posse, in the pursuit of two suspicious characters, who had driven to that point from Avon during the night.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LITTLE GAME IN ROOM 35.

WHILE sitting in the office reading the paper, Fred made up his mind to scrape up an acquaintance with Hopping and his friends, since he no longer had any fear of being recognized. He had every confidence in the world in his red wig, and freckled face and hands. He had scarcely come to that determination when he saw Hopping and one of the later arrivals come down the stairs and go up to the clerk's desk, where they looked over the register as if to see who had come in during the night or morning.

He saw Hopping turn to his companion and shake his head negatively.

"Now is my time," thought he to himself, and he quietly rose, walked up to the desk and said to the clerk, in a half confidential way:

"See here, Mr. Clerk, I have a twenty thousand dollar draft to deposit, and would like to have you tell me which you think is the best bank in the city to leave it with."

"The First National is as good as any," remarked the clerk, looking at him as though a bit surprised at seeing a youth so well supplied with funds. Hopping and his friend also looked at him with a good deal of interest.

"Excuse me, sir," said Hopping, addressing him; "I make my deposits in the Bank of Elmira, and have always found it safe, and the people there pleasant to deal with."

"Thank you," said Fred. "I've been here a number of times, but have had no dealings with any of the banks. This time my father sent me up from New York to close a real estate deal, and when that is done another and a larger draft is to be deposited. Hence my anxiety about getting into the best bank."

"Well, as for that," remarked Hopping, "I guess they are all sound. So your father is investing in Elmira real estate, eh?"

"Yes," replied Fred; "he has a good deal of faith in the future of Elmira, and seems to think it a good place to put out some of his surplus cash."

"Surplus cash is a good thing to have," remarked Hopping's companion, with a smile on his face, "and it isn't everybody that is so fortunate as to be burdened with it."

"No," assented Fred, "it wouldn't do for everybody to be rich."

"It wouldn't, hey! I'd like to know why?" and the man gave him an inquiring look.

"Why, the reason is plain," said Fred. "If every man was rich who would do the work?"

"A rich man has no need to work," said the other.

"Very true," assented Fred again, "but if nobody worked how would you and I get the clothes we wear and the food we eat?"

"Why, we'd buy them," replied the other.

"But who would make them?" Fred asked.

The man made no reply for a minute or so, and Hopping looked at him and laughed, saying:

"He's got you, Ed. He's right; but I never thought of it before."

"Of course I'm right," laughed Fred, "for if every man in this country was worth a million of dollars we'd come near starving to death, for a millionaire will not plow, hoe or dig, or make clothes, or cook for other people to eat. It is the few men with capital and the many who want to get some of it that make trade and build up a country."

"Look here, young man," said Hopping, extending his hand to Fred, "you have the oldest head on the youngest shoulders I ever ran up against."

"Well," laughed Fred, "I didn't think it required an old head to know that much."

"Well, it does," asserted Hopping, "for not one in a thousand would look at it from that standpoint; every man is doing his best to make a fortune."

"Very true, but not five out of a hundred succeed. Hence the ninety-five have to keep on working as employees for the five, and that's what keeps things going."

"What is your name?" Hopping asked.

"Fred Harris, of New York City."

Just then Hopping's wife was seen coming down the stairs, and Hollis said to him:

"Mrs. Hopping is coming down for breakfast."

"Have you been to breakfast, Harris?" Hopping asked.

"Yes, several hours ago; I'm an early riser."

"Well, I'll see you later," remarked Hopping "How long are you stopping here?"

"I can't say how long I will be detained. It may be several days."

Hopping went forward to meet his wife and escorted her into the breakfast-room, whilst Hollis remained with Fred a few minutes longer, evidently quite eager to scrape up an acquaintance with him. He gave Fred the names of himself and Hopping, and then excused himself, saying that he had to get his breakfast, too.

"Go ahead," said Fred. "I'll go out to the bank and will see you later."

Hollis entered the dining-room, and Fred walked out of the hotel, as if to go to the bank.

Out on the street Fred chuckled to himself, saying:

"By George, it was a lucky thought! They'll freeze to me, now that they think that I've got plenty of money, and I'll pretend to be just a bit of a sucker, so as to give them a chance at me. I'm quite certain they are waiting here for somebody else, who is either a pal or an expected victim. Whatever game they are playing, I'll be ready for them. I guess I had better go to the telegraph office and wire the sheriff at Avon."

It didn't take him long to find the telegraph office, which he entered and sent a dispatch to the sheriff.

"They are here. Have got them spotted. Will wire again." FRED.

That done he returned to the hotel after leaving his address with the operator, and again sat down to

read the paper whilst waiting for the villains to finish their breakfast.

Just as he expected, when they came out from the breakfast-room both of them joined him, and Hopping asked:

"Anything new in the paper?"

"No, I believe not, unless a bank robbery at Avon might be considered news; but that is something of such frequent occurrence nowadays that people regard it as a matter of course."

"Let me see it?" Hopping asked, and Fred handed him the paper and pointing to the column in which the account of the robbery was printed, he read it very carefully, with Hollis looking over his shoulder as though eager to get at the contents."

"What sort of a place is Avon?" Hollis asked of Fred.

"I'm blest if I know," was the reply. "I've got two friends there who are students at the academy; old schoolmates of mine."

"I guess they didn't get much from the bank," remarked Hopping, "as they don't have a very large capital in those little country places."

"No," returned Fred, "but ten thousand dollars in a place like that is as much as a million in the large cities. Hence the excitement there is probably as great as it would be in Elmira if a hundred thousand dollars were scooped from one of her banks."

"I guess you're right," assented Hopping. "Do you smoke, Harris?" and he drew a cigar-case from his pocket, extending it towards the youth.

"Thank you—no," replied Fred; "I tried it once with such disastrous results that I've never cared to repeat it."

Hopping and Hollis both laughed and lighted cigars, whilst the latter remarked:

"I guess I've had a similar experience with my first cigar, for I was the sickest boy you ever saw. I well recollect how I swore I'd never touch another one; but a day or two later the boys persuaded me to try it again and I found that I could go it all right, and I've been at it ever since."

"Yes," laughed Fred, "they told me the second one wouldn't hurt me, but I had had enough."

"Well, it isn't too late yet," remarked Hopping.

"Oh, I don't care for it," returned Fred.

"Do you ever drink anything?" Hollis asked.

"Oh, yes; I drink tea and coffee, and milk, and lemonade and soda water."

"Nothing else?"

"Nothing stronger," was the reply.

"Oh, look here, now," laughed Hopping, "you're too good to live long."

"Oh, I don't know; I'm a pretty healthy sort of a lad, and judging from the larruping my father used to give me, to say nothing of the whackings I got at school, I don't think that I'm rated as any too good. I have had about as much fun, I guess, as any other boy of my age, and that, too, without any headaches from drinking or smoking.

By such talk Fred succeeded in raking up a rather

jolly acquaintance with the party, and during the afternoon he was invited up to Hopping's room with Hollis, where he was introduced to the young woman whom he had talked with on the train, on the way up from Dupont. She greeted him with an easy cordiality, and said she was very glad to meet him. Fred took his seat and chatted gayly with her and the others, and noticed that she was sizing him up with a keenness that caused him to rate her as a very sharp, shrewd young woman.

Fred was a fly, wide-awake New York boy, who had come in contact with all sorts of characters in the metropolis, and was not easily deceived by either appearances or glib talking.

"Let's have a game of poker," suggested Mrs. Hopping, producing a pack of cards from the bureau drawer. "You men can go out on the streets, stroll around town, go into the saloons and amuse yourselves in a thousand ways; but we women have to stay in, hold our hands, and pass the long hours in a very monotonous way."

"Yes," said Fred. "But some women have a good time of it, particularly when they have somebody to pay their bills and pet them. Still, for all that, I'm glad that I don't belong to the sex."

"Well, you may be," she laughed, "for men are never hampered like women. Do you play poker?"

"I know very little about the game," he replied. "Euchre is my favorite."

"Well, let's play euchre, then," and she began to arrange the deck. "Will you be my partner?"

"Yes," replied Fred, and so they took seats around a little table.

"What's the stakes?" Hollis asked.

"Anything you please," she replied.

"Oh, no stakes," said Fred. "We'll simply play for the amusement."

"What amusement is there in a game where there are no stakes to excite interest?"

"Plenty of it," laughed Fred; "I can play the game just as well with no stakes as with them."

"That's all you know about it," laughed Hopping. "Did you ever go fishing?"

"Many a time," said Fred. "I'm very fond of the sport."

"Did you ever fish in clear water?"

"Yes."

"Did you ever rub your hook against the nose of a big fish with every nerve in your frame quivering with excitement, waiting for him to swallow it?"

"Yes," said Fred. "I did that last winter down in Florida."

"Well, then," said Hopping, "had it been a little fish you would not have felt the excitement like that caused by the presence of a big ten-pounder."

"No, of course not, but I never thought that the big fish was a fool for not taking the hook. It was the little ones that were foolish and got caught."

Mrs. Hopping burst into a laugh, while an expression of disgust swept across her husband's face.

"See here now, Harris," said Hopping, "if you think we are trying to catch you, we won't play."

"Oh, I don't think anything of the kind," returned Fred, "but I do know that when money is up on a game somebody is bound to lose."

"Of course," assented the other; "that's what adds interest to the game. Let's make the stakes five dollars," and he pulled out a bill and laid it on the table. Hollis did likewise, and Mrs. Hopping turned to her husband and said:

"Put up another one for me."

Fred very quietly drew a little roll of bills from his pocket, selected a five, laid it on the table, and said:

"Well, go ahead."

Hopping shuffled the cards and dealt them, and the game commenced.

Fred was really an expert at euchre, but it didn't take him long to see that all three of them were doing their best to let him win. He won game after game, until nearly one hundred dollars were piled up alongside of him, on his corner of the table.

"You are a good player," remarked Mrs. Hopping.

"Thank you," he returned, "it is the only game that I can play well."

"I'd like to try you on poker," said Hopping.

"I don't doubt it," laughed Fred, "but I prefer to play a game that I can play best, and I guess that's the case with you about poker."

"I guess if the truth were known, you can play poker about as well as you can euchre. Let's have something to drink."

"I don't care for anything myself," Fred remarked.

"Well, then, we'll stop. I'll go down and take a drink and take a walk about town."

"So will I," said Hollis, as both rose to their feet.

"Well, we'll continue the game, Mr. Harris," said the young woman in a very winning tone of voice.

"Oh, I wouldn't play against you," laughed Fred. "And as it was your skill that won this money I turn it over to you," and with that he pushed the bills off the table into her lap.

"Oh, dear!" she exclaimed, "do you mean that?"

"Yes," he replied, and he rose to his feet as if to leave the room with the other two.

CHAPTER V.

A BIG GAME TO BE PLAYED—FRED CALLS FOR A FRIEND TO JOIN HIM.

As Fred rose to his feet to leave the room the woman called to him reproachfully that she thought it was a shame for them all to go out and leave her alone, and asked him to remain and continue the game with her without any stakes.

"I would be pleased to do so, madam, some other time; but as I am sent here on business for my father I must attend to that first."

"Then you will come in again?" she asked.

"Oh, yes," he returned; "I will be at leisure in the evening," and with that he walked out with Hop-

ping and Hollis and left them in the corridor to go to his room.

Locking himself in, he said to himself :

"I am five dollars out on that racket, but it was worth it for the introduction. My room is next to theirs and there is a connecting door between them. The bureau in each room is backed up against the door, but I guess if I push mine out of the way, I may be able to overhear what passes in the other room."

With that idea in his mind he deftly moved the bureau from against the door and found the keyhole in the lock stuffed tightly with paper. With the aid of his knife blade, however, he easily removed it, after which by applying his ear close to it he could hear the woman moving about the room and once heard her say, as if talking to herself :

"He is red headed and freckle-faced, but he is no fool."

He couldn't help smiling softly to himself as he overheard the remark.

"She's got me down fine," he thought, "and I must return the compliment, for she is a long ways off from being a fool herself."

By and by he heard her leave the room, and a few minutes after he passed out himself. Before he reached the head of the stairs he passed the door of the ladies' parlor; she was in there, as were two other ladies, also a chamber maid, who was engaged in some duties he did not particularly notice.

On seeing him Mrs. Hopping smiled and beckoned to him with her fan. He at once joined her, when she remarked :

"I am so sorry you couldn't stay longer, for I assure you it is very lonesome in a place like this, when one has no acquaintances to talk with."

"Well," he laughed, "I certainly hope we can meet again."

"Oh, we must," she replied, "for I like you very much on short acquaintance."

"Thank you," he laughed, "that is something I appreciate very much."

He then left her and passed on down into the main office of the hotel.

"Another man came in with Hollis," Fred muttered to himself, "and registered under the name of Morris; but I've seen nothing of him to-day. I wonder what he is up to?"

To keep up the appearance of things, Fred left the hotel and went over to a store, where he made a small purchase, after which he made his way around to the bank, which he entered, saying to himself as he did so :

"They may be watching me, and it is well enough to let them see me going in and out of the bank."

After staying inside about ten minutes, he came out and saw Hollis on the opposite side of the street.

"Just as I thought," he muttered to himself. "I guess I've got them on a string."

Two hours later Fred was in his room and heard someone enter the one occupied by the Hoppings. He knelt at the keyhole of the connecting door and was

soon satisfied that it was the woman herself, and that she was alone. After spending some time in that position, he was about to get up, when he heard the door open and close again with a sharp snap.

The next moment he heard the voice of Hopping speaking to his wife, saying in hurried tones :

"Nell, they have come."

"When?" she asked.

"Not ten minutes ago," he replied, "and they have rooms over the parlor."

"Is the child with them?" she asked.

"Yes, and the nurse, too."

"Then we've no time to lose," said she.

"No," he returned, "but I'm worried about Morris. He ought to have been back before this."

They were evidently standing by the bureau, and though they spoke in low tones, Fred was able to overhear pretty much every word. Once in a while he had missed a word, but those which he did hear distinctly enabled him to understand what they were talking about.

"Now hurry up and play your part of the game," said Hopping, "and we'll do the rest."

"It may take two or three days," said she.

"Of course," he assented; "you'll do well if you play it in three days. In the meantime keep your eye on that young Harris, for if we can get him in the toils he will be rich plucking."

"Yes, but he is no fool."

"Neither are you," he returned.

"I hope not," she laughed.

After a few more minutes of conversation, Hopping turned and left the room. Fred heard his footsteps as he passed his door, but kept his position as eavesdropper at the keyhole. The woman was evidently still standing at the bureau in her room, probably brushing her hair or admiring herself in the mirror.

"It's a desperate game," he heard her say to herself, "and if we don't play it successfully we'll have to do some pretty fast traveling to keep out of trouble. I would much rather take young Harris in hand than to play the other game, although the stakes are larger. I don't think Harris would kick and advertise himself as a greenhorn, but the judge's family and their friends will raise an awful row about the child."

"Great Scott!" thought Fred, as he listened, "it's a child-stealing game she is talking about, as well as yours truly. They are welcome to whatever they can pluck off of me. I'm going to find out who it is that has arrived at this hotel with a young child, and see what I can do to balk the game. What a precious lot of villains they are! I've been after them but two days and find them as busy as bees. They robbed old man Andrews, but were knocked out on that. Then they sacked the Avon Bank and got away scot free with the plunder. Now they are after the child of some rich couple, to say nothing of a supposedly rich young man with red hair and freckled face. Oh, but it's interesting, and I find playing de-

detective about the finest game I ever ran up against, and that woman in there plays a splendid hand in the game. She is charming, educated, shrewd and unscrupulous, but if I can't beat the gang of them I will change my name from Fred to 'chump.'"

After thus communing with himself, Fred quietly rose and left his room to stroll down-stairs to the main office. There he inspected the register of the latest arrivals, and found there the name of Judge Holman, wife, child and nurse, who had just arrived from Schenectady.

"They are the intended victims," he remarked, as he turned away from the desk, "and I guess I had better wait around to catch a glimpse of them and find out what I can about them."

Half an hour later he saw the Judge and Mrs. Holman descending the stairs, leading a little three year old, flaxen haired, blue-eyed boy by the hand. He gazed after them as they entered the dining-room and then asked the clerk at the desk, who they were.

"They are Judge Holman and his wife, of Schenectady," said the clerk.

"Oh, indeed," returned Fred, "I have heard of the judge. He is a very wealthy man, I believe."

"I should say he was. He is rated at about five millions, I believe."

"That's a pretty snug sum," laughed Fred, who turned away and entered the dining-room himself, taking a seat at the table in the neighborhood of that occupied by the new-comers. He had just begun on his soup, when Mrs. Hopping came in and, on seeing him, smiled as though greatly pleased and asked the waiter to let her sit at the same table with the young gentleman with the red hair, he being an acquaintance of hers.

"Certainly, madam," said the waiter, bowing obsequiously and leading the way to the table, where she was seated close by Fred, to whom she said:

"You selfish fellow! Why didn't you call and escort me down to dinner?"

"I didn't know you wished me to do so," he replied.

"Yes, I did," she laughed. "You see how I am left to take care of myself. My husband is not half as attentive as a husband should be to his wife."

"All the same if he found any other fellow paying attention to you he might break his head; and while I am a great admirer of yourself, I go very shy on angry husbands."

"Oh, pshaw!" she ejaculated; "you are not good looking enough to make my husband jealous."

"That's tough," laughed Fred, "and I am real glad now that I didn't have the temerity to knock at your door and offer to escort you down here."

"I believe you are," she retorted, with just the slightest pout, "for I think you are a good deal like my husband; don't care much for the ladies."

"You are very much mistaken. It's the ladies who seem to detest red-headed men."

"That's not the case with me," she returned, "for I think your hair the most beautiful I ever saw. But

do you notice what beautiful hair that little child has there at the next table."

"Yes," he replied, "I was admiring it when you came in."

"Do you know who they are?" she asked.

"All I know about them," he returned, "is that they are registered as the Holmans of Schenectady."

During the meal Fred noticed that she was watching the Holmans and the little child with the keenest interest, having very little to say. She remained in her seat until the Holmans left and then as she arose to leave Fred accompanied her up-stairs to the ladies' parlor. There he left her to return down-stairs to the reading-room, where he wrote a letter to the sheriff at Avon, after which he wrote another to Terry Olcott at the Avon Academy.

In his letter to Terry, he asked him that if he could possibly do so, to get away from the academy and join him at the Mohawk House, in Elmira, by the next train, as he wanted him with him in some dangerous work; that under no circumstances should he let anyone know where he was going. When he finished the two letters, he sealed and addressed them and went out to mail them. As he passed out of the hotel he saw the man, Morris, for whom Hopping and Hollis were evidently waiting, come in. Of course Morris did not recognize him and the two passed on in opposite directions.

"He has come," said Fred to himself; "now I guess the game will begin. I hope no move will be made, though, before Terry gets here, for I don't like to play it single handed. Terry is game to the core, as I found that out in less than a week after I landed at the academy. We had to have a fight, but after that we were the best of friends, and I don't know of one whom I would rather have to back me up in a tight place, and he is as fond of a scrimmage as a girl is of caramels."

As soon as he had posted the letters, Fred hurried back to the hotel and made his way to his room. On entering he heard talking in Hopping's room, which instantly ceased, as though they were afraid of being overheard by him.

"I'll have to get out," he thought to himself, "or at least make them think that I have left, or they will be very careful about what they are saying;" and he walked around the room a few minutes, after which he opened the door and walked towards the stairway, planting his heels very firmly on the floor as he went, but on reaching the head of the stairs he stopped and deliberately took off his shoes. Then he returned to his room, with his shoes in his hand, stepping as softly as a cat. Closing the door slowly and cautiously he crept to the keyhole of the partition door to listen. They were talking in low tones and it was quite difficult for him to make out what they were saying. He missed entire sentences, but he caught enough to understand that Morris had been somewhere making preparation for some move that was to be made by the entire gang. As the conversation went on, he

heard his own name, Harris, mentioned by Hopping, whereupon the young woman put in :

"Yes, but if you think that he is a soft-headed fool you are very much mistaken. He is red headed and freckled, but as sharp as a needle's point, and if we catch him at all we have got to do it before attending to the other case."

"Oh, well," said Hopping, "I guess you are sharp enough for him, for a woman like you can turn the head of almost any man when she makes up her mind to it."

"Don't set yourself up as a standard," she laughed, "and flatter yourself that because I got the best of you I can do the same with any other man. Some men are awfully conceited."

"Oh, that's all right, Nell," chuckled Hopping, "you go ahead and play the game. Just press the button and we'll do the rest."

"Why not get him in a corner," she suggested, "and make him sign a check with the muzzle of a revolver pointed at his head, and then keep him till the money is secured?"

"That's a quicker way," said Hopping, "but far more dangerous, for he would squeal the moment we let him go and there'd be the deuce to pay; but if you handled him the probabilities are he would keep his mouth shut and spend a few days kicking himself."

"Well, I'll do my best," she assented, and then they seemed to drop the conversation to indulge in a quiet game of cards.

Fred had heard enough to force him to set his wits at work to shape out a course to be pursued.

"It's best for me to keep out of their way," he said, "until Terry arrives; or, at least, not let them get me into their clutches. Terry can't get here before to-morrow evening, and to do that he'll have to move pretty lively; but when he does come I'll let him in to the whole plot and then play the game to a finish."

CHAPTER VI.

"YOU'LL BE SHOT IF YOU DON'T! I'LL GIVE YOU FIVE MINUTES!"

DURING the greater part of the day Fred remained around the hotel reading the papers and conversing with anyone whom he could find to talk to him, preferring to avoid the Hopping crowd as much as possible until the arrival of Terry Olcott.

Hollis joined him after a while, and invited him to walk out in the town with him. He went along, conversing on various topics, finding the man quite well informed. Twice Hollis invited him into saloons to drink, but he flatly refused, with the statement that he never drank intoxicants of any kind, and that when he wanted soda water, he preferred to go to a drug store for it.

He was not sure but what Hollis was trying to lead him into some den for the purpose of cornering him, and thus get him in his power. He was careful, however, in his refusal to enter any saloon to avoid leav-

ing the impression upon his mind that he was afraid of him.

"You're a queer chap," remarked Hollis, "for you will find as you grow up in the world that the great majority of people believe in promoting sociability with wines and liquors of some kind."

"Oh, yes, I have found that out already," he replied, "and I have found out furthermore that the majority of those who come to grief first pass through the saloon."

"Oh, you're a temperance man," said Hollis.

"Yes; so far as drinking is I am, and I expect to remain so as long as I live. I promised my mother that, and it's going to take a mighty strong temptation to make me break it."

When they returned to the hotel they found Hopping waiting for them, who invited them up to his room for a game of euchre.

"You'll have to excuse me," said Fred, "as I have some letters to write, after which I must call on the family of an old friend of my father's."

Hopping seemed just a bit disappointed, and remarked that he would see him later, after which they separated. A little later, on going up to his room, he saw Mrs. Hopping standing in the door of the ladies' parlor. She stopped him and invited him in. He entered the parlor and there found the nurse with the Holman child seated near the window.

"Did you ever see such a beautiful child?" Mrs. Hopping said to him, as she led him up to where the nurse and the child were sitting, and patted the little fellow on the head.

"He is certainly a very beautiful child," remarked Fred, and he shook hands with the little fellow.

He saw at a glance that the woman had been making friends with the child and the nurse. After conversing with her for a few minutes, he excused himself and went on to his room. There he laid down on his bed to ponder and think. He lay there for upwards of an hour, when he heard someone enter the Hoppings' room. He was up and at the keyhole of the partition door without a moment's loss of time. From what he heard he judged that the two were Hopping and the man Morris.

"Is everything ready?" he heard Hopping ask.

"Yes," replied the other, "and waiting."

"Well, we've got to be cheerful," Hopping remarked; "if we can, we want to strike two blows on the same day. That red-headed youth is very fly."

"Does he suspect anything?" Morris asked.

"No; I think not. But he seems to be cautious with strangers. I think he has been scooped before and is on his guard, and the only way we can work him is to get him into some place where he'll have to sign a check to save his life. Then we've got to put him to sleep till we can get away."

"How will you put him to sleep if he won't drink anything?" Morris asked.

"We'll chloroform him."

Just then Mrs. Hopping entered the room and the conversation changed to other topics, and a few min-

utes later the two men went out, leaving her alone. Fred listened to her moving about the room for some time, but never heard her utter a word. By and by she went out, too, and Fred made up his mind to remain locked in his room to avoid coming in contact with them, as his efforts to keep out of their clutches might excite their suspicion.

"I guess they won't leave," he reasoned with himself, "as long as they have a hope of getting me into their clutches, so if I remain here in my room all night I'll find them waiting for me in the morning. I'd change my disguise if I could, but these freckles are on to stay for a week so it is not so easy to do it; but when Terry comes I'll set him to watching them."

When night came on Fred slipped out of his room, made his way down-stairs and went to a restaurant for his supper, to avoid meeting the Hoppings in the dining-room of the hotel, after which he went to a theater and didn't return to his room until midnight. Before he went up-stairs the clerk informed him that the Hoppings had inquired after him several times during the evening.

"Sorry I wasn't in," he remarked.

The next morning as he came down from his room he found Hollis waiting for him.

"Where in thunder have you been?" he asked.

"We couldn't find you last night at all."

"I was with some friends," he replied.

"I didn't know you had any acquaintances in Elmira."

"Only the members of one family," he returned, "and they insisted on my going to the theater with them last night."

Hollis kept him engaged until the Hoppings came down, and together they entered the breakfast-room. Mrs. Hopping was extremely gracious to him, and insisted on his sitting by her side at the table. He did so, and all through the meal chatted pleasantly with her. When they left the dining-room Fred went up to the clerk's desk, and glancing over the register was astonished at finding there the name of Terry Olcott, and that he had been assigned to room 40, which was in the same corridor with his own.

"Great Scott!" he mentally exclaimed, "he surely didn't get my letter. I wonder what brought him here? The way to find out is to go up and ask him," so he hurried up-stairs, past his own door, and rapped at the door of room 40.

It took him nearly five minutes to wake him up. Then he heard him get out of bed and unlock the door. Opening it just an inch, Terry asked:

"Who is it?"

"It's me, Terry, Fred."

"Oh, the deuce! Come in!" and he opened the door.

Fred walked in, shut the door and locked it.

Terry looked at him in amazement, for the red wig and freckled face was no more like Fred Fearnot than an elephant was like a giraffe.

"Who in thunder are you?" Terry asked.

"Why, don't you know me, old man?" Fred laughed.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Terry, "the voice is the voice of Jacob, but the head is that of a woodpecker!"

Fred exploded, grasped his hand and said:

"You've got me down fine, old man, and I was never so glad in my life to see you;" and with that he took his hat off and removed his wig, which satisfied Terry that he was, in fact, Fred Fearnot.

"What brought you here, Terry, Fred asked.

"I came on the train," he replied.

"Did you get my letter?"

"No."

"Well then, tell me why you are here in Elmira."

"All right. I met the sheriff on Main street, in Avon, and asked him if he had heard from you. He said that he had just received a dispatch from you and showed it to me; and to save my life I couldn't resist the temptation to run up and help you out, and I told the sheriff I intended to do so. As I had just received a draft from home I was all right for the trip. I had but twenty minutes in which to catch the train, so the sheriff went to the depot with me, and on the way told me to tell you that he was leaving the whole thing to you, whilst holding himself in readiness to respond at any time you wanted him."

"Good! the sheriff is all right, but after I telegraphed to him I wrote you, asking you to come on the next train, though I didn't expect you until to-night." And then Fred sat down and in a low tone posted him thoroughly as to the situation.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Terry, "you've got your hands full."

"You bet I have," he assented; "for they're after me as well as the Holman child, and that, too, after scooping the bank at Avon. Have you got a gun?"

"No, nothing but a pocket-knife."

"Well, you must have a revolver, and the sooner you get it the better."

"Where can I find one?" Terry asked.

"Oh, there are plenty of stores where you can buy one, with a box of cartridges. You may not need it, but if you should, you would never need anything as much in your life. Go down now and get your breakfast, then come back here and we'll go out for one."

Terry went down-stairs to breakfast, whilst Fred waited for him in room 40. He didn't have to wait long, for Terry was in a rather excited state of mind, and anxious to get to business with Fred. As soon as he returned the two left the hotel, and went out to purchase a revolver and cartridges, after which Fred instructed him what to do.

"Just shadow me wherever I go, and when I want your assistance I'll give a shrill whistle with my two fingers in my mouth, then come in with your revolver, but don't shoot unless you see that it is necessary."

"All right," said Terry.

"Now," added Fred, "they haven't seen you yet, and, of course, don't know who you are, but if they

should see us together they might become suspicious of you, so we'll be as strangers at the hotel—at least, for the present."

And with that Fred walked on ahead, with Terry following him a few paces in the rear.

"Hallo, Harris!" greeted Hollis, as Fred entered the main office; "what have you to do to-day?"

"Nothing much; I find that I have to wait a day or two longer before I can wind up my business here. Why do you ask?"

"Well, Hopping and I are going to take a carriage ride, just beyond the edge of town, to see a friend and would like to have you go along with us."

"Well, I don't mind. What time do you go?" and Fred looked at his watch.

"We go in about an hour," said Hollis.

"Well, I'll be ready by that time," and with that Hollis went up-stairs and Fred turned to Terry, and said:

"We are going for a carriage ride to some place out in the country. Go out and engage a carriage to follow wherever we go."

Terry went out and inside of ten minutes had engaged a carriage, with a stalwart young Irishman as a driver. He was on hand when Fred, Hopping and Hollis left the hotel and entered the carriage that had been waiting for them. When they drove away Terry followed, keeping their carriage well in sight. They drove out beyond the outskirts of the city, where they stopped in front of a small frame house, which appeared to be deserted.

"Say, Hollis," said Hopping, "it looks as though no one was at home."

"Yes," replied Hollis, "I'll get out and see." And he left the carriage, opened the gate and passed on to the house which stood back some fifty feet or more from the roadside. The door was part way opened, in reponse to his knock, after which Hollis called out:

"It's all right, John. Come in."

"Come ahead, Harris," said Hopping, as he alighted from the carriage and held the door open for Fred, who followed him as though he suspected no danger whatever; and the two passed through the gate and entered the house.

Before passing in, Fred looked back up the road and saw Terry's carriage about a hundred yards away; so he knew that help was close by, if he needed it. As he stepped inside he found a third man there, who was no other than Morris, one of their pals.

"Hallo! you here," he greeted.

"Yes," said Morris. "Glad to see you," and he shook hands with him.

"Come in the back room here," said Hopping, running his arm through Fred's, and they passed through a door into a rear room where there was a little table and a chair. On the table were pen, ink and a little book, which proved to be blank checks of the Elmira Bank.

"Harris," said Hopping, "sit down in that chair

there and write a check for twenty thousand dollars, payable to the order of John Hopping."

"I'll be hanged if I do," said Fred.

"No; but you'll be shot if you don't," said Hopping, very coolly, and all three of the men drew revolvers.

"What in thunder does this mean?" Fred asked.

"It means that we are bound to have the money that you deposited in the bank yesterday, and if we don't get it you'll be left here in this vacant house as dead as a smoked herring."

Fred looked from one to the other in silence for several minutes, after which he said:

"You are a lot of villains!"

"We won't dispute that," said Hopping, "so you needn't discuss it at all, but just sit down there and fill out that check. When men play this sort of a game they either hit or miss. If we miss, you are a dead man. If we hit, we will leave you in charge of one until the money is secured. After that we turn you loose, late in the night, by which time we will be out of reach of officers. Now, take your choice and be quick about it."

Fred hesitated for several minutes, when Hopping pulled out his watch, and said:

"I'll give you five minutes."

At the end of three minutes Fred sat down to the table, took up the pen, filled out the check and signed it, Fred Harris.

CHAPTER VII.

"HOLD UP YOUR HANDS!"

WHEN he had signed his name to the check, Fred leaned back in the chair, with the remark:

"It won't do you any good."

"Why not?" Hopping asked.

"Because fellows like you get caught up with, in the end. My father will spend fifty thousand dollars to catch you."

"Oh, we'll take the chances on getting caught. Come on, Hollis;" and the two left the room together, leaving the man, Morris, in the room with Fred.

Fred rose to his feet, but Morris covered him with a revolver and sternly ordered him to sit down again. He dropped back into the chair and said to him:

"Oh, put up your gun! The blamed thing might go off accidentally."

"No danger of that," returned Morris, "if you keep quiet."

"Oh, I'll keep quiet enough," returned Fred, "for I'm unarmed."

When Hopping and Hollis returned to the carriage they were somewhat surprised at seeing another carriage there, and the two drivers conversing like old acquaintances, which they really were. They also saw a youth sitting in the second carriage, but the thought naturally occurred to them that the two drivers being acquainted, were simply chatting with each other over nothing in particular.

"We'll go back to town now," said Hopping to his driver, as he entered the carriage.

"All right, sir," said the driver, gathering up his reins, and turning around drove off towards the city, leaving the other carriage standing in the road.

Terry kept his seat in the carriage some ten or fifteen minutes, nervously waiting for the signal which Fred was to give him. Suddenly he heard it, and springing out he dashed through the gate and rushed up to the door of the house. It was locked and resisted all his efforts to push it open.

Then he ran around the house, where he found a rear door open, and in the room saw the man Morris standing up against the wall, with both hands raised above his head, and Fred in front of him some four or five feet away, covering his breast with a revolver.

"Just in time, Terry," said Fred; "I've got the drop on him."

"Why don't you shoot him?" Terry asked.

"Oh, I'd rather catch him alive. Just go through him now and take his revolver away, and if he lowers either hand an inch, I'll plug him."

Morris was so badly frightened that his face was ashen-hued. He never uttered a word, whilst Terry quietly searched his pockets, and took from one of them a revolver, from another a murderous-looking knife, both of which he laid on the little table near where Fred was standing.

"Search him thoroughly, Terry," said Fred, "and secure all letters and papers you may find about him."

Terry did so, after which he picked up the revolver and knife, and put them in his own pocket.

"Now, Mr. Morris," said Fred, "you can take your hands down and you're at liberty to get away, if you think you can do so. I'm a pretty good shot and would like nothing better than to have a little target practice with you going at full speed."

"I'm not anxious to get shot," said Morris, speaking for the first time.

"No; I suppose not, but I confess to an itching to give you a bullet for the villainous game you have played against me. I don't suppose that we could force any confession out of you, so I am going to turn you over to the police of Elmira and then look after Hopping and Hollis. Have you got anything with you, Terry, with which you can tie him up hard and fast?"

"Nothing but a handkerchief," he replied.

"That won't do. Go out and see the driver of your carriage. Maybe he has a leather strap or two."

Terry passed through the front of the house, opening the door, and ran out to the carriage.

"Say, driver," he asked, "have you got a cord of any kind that is strong enough to tie a man up with?"

"Yes, boss, I've got a long, rawhide whiplash under the seat here, but who the tarnation blazes do you want to tie up?"

"Oh, we've got the worst kind of a robber captured in the house there. That whistle you heard was a signal for me to help out a friend of mine."

"Thunder!" exclaimed the driver. "Do you want any help?"

"Yes. Get down, tie your horses and come in with that whiplash. I guess you can tie him up better than we can."

The stalwart young driver sprang from his seat and led his team up to the gate post, where he tied them securely, after which he got the whiplash and followed Terry into the house.

"What in tarnation business does this mean?" he asked, as soon as he saw Fred covering Morris with his revolver.

"Tie him up first and then I'll tell you," said Fred.

"You'd better tell me first," he replied, "for I don't want to tie up an innocent man."

"There's nothing innocent about him," remarked Fred. "He was waiting here when his two pals inveigled me into this vacant house, under pretense that they were visiting a friend. As soon as they got me in here they drew their guns on me, and forced me to sign a check for twenty thousand dollars, which they took away with them, leaving this chap to hold me until they got the money. Thinking I was unarmed he put his gun in his pocket after awhile, and I got the drop on him. Now, tie him up."

"You bet your life I will," said the driver, catching hold of Morris and jerking him around with considerable force, remarking as he did so that it was a pity they didn't have a rope with which to hang him.

There being three to one now in the room, Fred put his revolver in his pocket. No sooner had he done so than Morris butted the coachman in the face with such force as to lay him out on his back on the floor. The next moment he dashed for the back door, but Fred barred the way and the two rolled out, down the steps into the yard. Terry sprang after them, seized Morris by the heels and began turning round and round with him and thus prevented him getting upon his feet.

Before Fred could get upon his feet the coachman sprang out of the door, with a yell like a Comanche Indian. His nose was bleeding from the effect of the contact with Morris' head. The coachman caught Terry around the waist, swung him out of the way, saying:

"Stand off now and let me fix him!"

Morris sprang to his feet, and the coachman went for him. For nearly five minutes it was a rough-and-tumble fight with nature's weapons. The coachman was good at butting, too, and before he got through with his man the latter's countenance was spoiled for a month. To avoid further punishment he laid down on the ground. The coachman, however, caught him by the collar, pulled him to his feet, and gave him blow after blow with his fist, until he sank down again insensible.

"Now hold up, driver," said Fred. "We don't want to kill him."

"That's just what I want to do, sir."

"Well, you've pretty near done it," said Terry.

"Don't hit a man when he's down, no matter how much he deserves it."

"Better tie him now," suggested Fred.

"All right, sir," and the coachman took his raw-hide thong, drew Morris' hands behind his back, and bound him as fast as though a pair of steel nippers had been placed upon his wrists.

"Say, driver," said Fred, extending his hand to him, "you're a good one."

"You bet he is," added Terry, "and hanged if I don't chip in five dollars to him for the help he has given us."

"I'll do the same," said Fred; and each of the boys handed the driver a five dollar bill.

"Thank you, boss," said the driver, as he put the money in his pocket. "I'll stand by you till all my wheels come off."

"Glad to hear that," said Fred, "and if you'll just keep mum and not say a word about this thing until the game is played to a finish, it will be more money in your pocket."

"That's all right, boss. Just tell me what you want me to do and I'm right in it with you up to my neck."

"You're just the man I want. Now, Terry, I want to run back into town and watch those other two fellows. We'll put this man in the back room here and leave you to guard him. If those other two come back before I do, tell them to hold up their hands; if they don't blaze away even if you kill them both."

"All right," said Terry; "I've got two revolvers, and I guess I am about as good a shot as any other man."

"So you are, and I know it," assented Fred. "Now let's put him in the house."

The driver took Morris up in his arms, bore him into the house, and laid him on the floor, after which he went out to his carriage and returned with a leather strap, which he buckled round his ankles, and he drew it tight, too.

"Now I'm ready to go with you, boss," he said to Fred.

"All right; we're off!" and the two went out to the carriage and drove away towards the city at a very rapid pace.

Just before reaching the city, Fred removed the red wig from his head and asked the driver to exchange hats with him. The driver did so, and Fred pulled the hat down over his eyes, leaving the back part of his head exposed. When within a block of the hotel he told the driver to stop and wait there till he returned.

"No use of my going to the bank," he reasoned with himself, as he turned away from the carriage, "for there's no money there for them to get, but I'll go to the hotel and see if they've been there." And as he had the key to his room in his pocket, he went up and entered it. He could hear no one in the Hoppings' room, nor could he find that anybody was in Hollis' room.

"I'll go down and see the clerk," he muttered, and

taking the red wig out of his pocket, he readjusted it to his head and strolled down-stairs to the desk.

"Do you know whether Mr. Hopping is in or not?" he asked the clerk.

"No," was the reply. "He was here about an hour ago and asked for his wife. I told him she had gone out for a walk with Mrs. Holman's nurse and the little child, and he then went out, saying he would hunt her up."

"Great Scott!" thought Fred. "She will get away with the child." And he went out of the hotel, blaming himself for managing the matter so bunglingly. "If I can't catch up with him they will get away with the child."

He ran back to the carriage and told the driver to drive around through several streets, as he wanted to look out for one or both of the men who went out into the country with him that morning, and asked him to also keep a strict watch whilst driving about.

"All right, boss," said the driver, and Fred entered the carriage.

They spent a couple of hours driving about, and then returned to the hotel, where Fred asked the clerk if Mr. or Mrs. Hopping had come in.

"Not yet," said the clerk.

"Has the nurse and child come back?"

"No."

Fred turned and made his way back to the carriage, and told the driver that they would have to go back out into the country, where he left his friend and the prisoner. Just as he was entering the carriage a hackman drove up with a team and stopped, calling out to Fred's driver.

"What hit you, Mike?"

"I ran against the door last night," returned the driver.

"Oh, you be hanged!" laughed the hackman. "You've been in a fight and got licked."

"There isn't a man in Elmira who can lick me, Joe."

"Well," laughed Joe, "that door gave you a pretty hard lick."

"You bet it did," said Mike, whose face was swollen on one side, with a very dark discoloration under his left eye.

Mike whipped up his horses and drove off, going out in the same direction he had carried Terry that morning. When they reached the house Fred gave a whistle, with two fingers in his mouth, whereupon the door opened and Terry came out. Fred alighted and met him at the gate, asking:

"Is your man all right?"

"Yes, he's all right, but in a very bad humor. Did you see anything of the other fellows?"

"No; I fear they have gotten away with the child, and I came back here thinking they might come this way with it. Have you seen them pass?"

"No," replied Terry. "Quite a number of teams have passed, but they were all farmers' teams; not a carriage among them."

"Well, it's hardly likely that they will leave Morris here without sending him word by somebody, or coming here after him, so the best thing we can do is to lie in wait for him here."

"I guess you're right," assented Terry.

"Now, Mike," said Fred, turning to the driver, "you had better drive down the road about a hundred yards and turn into the bushes, after which you can come back here and wait with us, for if we are to have a scrimmage you're just the man I would like to have at my back."

"All right, boss, you can count me in," and Mike drove down the road about a hundred yards or so, where he turned into the bushes far enough to conceal his carriage from passers-by. Then he hitched his horses and returned to the house.

While they were waiting there Fred undertook to question Morris, but soon found he could get nothing out of him.

"You may as well own up," he said to him, "for I've got you dead to rights. You and Hopping cleaned out the bank at Avon the other night."

A startled expression came into the prisoner's eyes but he never uttered a word.

"I passed you and Hopping that night standing in front of the bank. Hopping wore a bushy beard. When you got through with looting the bank you went across the river to where you had a buggy concealed in the woods and drove to Dupont. When you reached that place Hopping had taken off his beard."

CHAPTER VIII.

"ALL THAT A MAN HATH WILL HE GIVE FOR HIS LIFE."

As the prisoner listened to what Fred was saying, it was impossible to conceal his astonishment and nervousness. Both the boys perceived it, and to make him still more nervous, Fred related several other incidents bearing upon the subject.

"You see that I'm right onto you," said Fred, with a very knowing expression in his face.

"Oh, you're away off," said the prisoner; "I know nothing whatever about it."

"Oh, yes, you do," asserted Fred, "for I saw you both very plainly when you led the horse out of the woods into the middle of the road, and I heard you say to Hopping that you could reach the train at Dupont by daylight, if you didn't collide with anything in the dark."

"You didn't hear anything of the kind," said the prisoner.

"Oh, that's all right; I expect you'll deny anything, but I'm right onto you with both feet. I followed you from Dupont on the next train, making Mrs. Hopping's acquaintance on the way. She is a very charming woman and as bad as she is beautiful. I know that for the past two days the gang of you have been lying in wait to kidnap Judge Holman's little child."

Morris gave a start as though stung by a bee, but in a moment he recovered his self-possession and asked Fred to let him sit in a chair, as it was very painful lying bound as he was.

"All right; we'll set you up," and the three lifted him from the floor and set him in a chair in front of the little table.

"Now see here, Morris, when I arrived in Elmira I found that you and Hopping were not at the train to meet Mrs. Hopping. You were both out somewhere, but Hopping came in during the night, while you and Hollis showed up the next day. You immediately disappeared, while Hollis remained. They were waiting for Judge Holman and his wife, whilst you were scouting around to find a safe place to take the child to when they got it. In the meantime they found out that I had deposited a twenty thousand dollar draft in the bank, and they put up this job on me to-day for the purpose of getting it. They've gone back to town to get away with the child. Where they will take it I don't know, but I am fully satisfied that you do, and if they don't show up pretty soon you've got to give the whole snap away, or you don't leave this place alive!"

"Oh, I'm not afraid of your killing anybody," sneered the prisoner.

"Well, you'll know more when I get through than you do now. You three made me sign that check with revolvers close to my head. I am satisfied it was the intention to put me out of the way in case of failure, and you can just bet your wicked life that I'll do the same thing with you."

Morris made no reply, but glared at him like an enraged tiger at bay. By this time it was very near night, and Fred and the others were on the lookout for one or more of the conspirators to put in an appearance, feeling satisfied that such would be the case. When it began to grow dark Fred decided to stand out by the gate and stand guard, to see that no one crept up about the house unperceived. An hour passed and a carriage was heard coming rapidly down the road. It stopped in front of the gate and a man with a bushy beard sprang out and started to the house. Quick as a flash Fred planted himself in front of him with a revolver pointed at his breast, and called out:

"Hands up, Hopping, or you are a dead man!"

"Eh, eh!" gasped Hopping, springing back, as though utterly dumfounded.

"Hands up, blast you!" hissed Fred, "or I'll fire."

Up went both hands high above his head.

"Drive on quick!" cried a woman's voice in the carriage, and the next moment the driver lashed his horses and they bounded away down the road at full speed.

On hearing voices out in the front yard, both Terry and Mike dashed out of the house to find Fred master of the situation.

"Who've you got?" Terry asked, hurriedly.

"Oh, I've got the head pin of the whole gang. Disarm him, for he has got a gun."

Terry started towards him, and the man stepped back two or three paces, saying as he did so:

"Hold on, now, you are carrying this thing a little too far," and he lowered both of his hands half way down. Terry and Fred called out fiercely:

"Keep your hands up, sir."

He raised them a little higher, but kept backing towards the gate. Mike ran around behind him and caught him around the waist. Quick as a flash the man reached for his gun, but Terry grasped his hand and held it. Then Mike tripped him and they fell to the ground. Terry succeeded in getting his weapon from him.

"Now, let him up, Mike," said Fred, "but hold on to him."

When he rose to his feet, Fred reached out, seized the bushy beard and yanked it from his face, saying as he did so:

"This is the same beard you wore the night you looted the bank at Avon, Mr. Hopping."

"I never was in Avon in my life," replied the prisoner.

"Is that so," said Fred. "Didn't you get peppered in the back with some bird shot about two months ago, after robbing old man Andrews' farmhouse?"

"No," was the blunt answer.

"Oh, come now," laughed Fred; "after you looted the bank that night you went across the bridge with a pal to where a horse and buggy were concealed in the woods. You drove to Dupont and took the train for Elmira. You see, Morris has given you dead away."

"Morris?" gasped Hopping.

"Yes. He's trying to save himself by squealing."

"Where is he?" Hopping asked, in a husky tone of voice.

"Oh, we've got him dead to rights back in the house here."

"It's all a lie, John!" called Morris from the house, "haven't told him a thing."

"Just as I thought," said Hopping. "Now, who the dence are you, who pretends to know so much about other people's business?"

"You don't know me, eh?" Fred laughed.

"All I know about you is what I've seen in the last two days."

"Well, I'm the boy with the shotgun, who was with old man Andrews the day we caught up with three of you."

"Hanged if I know what you are talking about," said Hopping, with the coolest sort of nerve.

"Oh, yes you do, well enough. My name is Fred Fearnot."

The mention of his name seemed to have no effect upon Hopping, as he evidently suspected who he was before that.

"Never heard the name before," he said.

"Oh, well, it makes no difference whether you have

or not. You'll soon find out at any rate. Mike," and he turned to the coachman, "can you find something to tie him up with?"

"Guess I can, boss."

"Well, do so, then," and Mike took from his pocket some strong cord which he had not thought of when he was called on to tie up the other prisoner.

Hopping objected strongly to being tied and made a movement to resist; but just about ten seconds only were required to convince him of the utter uselessness of resistance. His hands were soon bound behind his back as securely as were the other prisoner's in the house.

"Now bring him in the house, Mike," ordered Fred; and he was led into the room where Morris was sitting in the chair by the little table. It was so dark in there, however, that nothing could be seen.

"Terry, have you a match?" Fred asked.

"No," answered Terry.

"Have you a match, Mike?"

"Yes, boss," and he reached in his pocket and got out a match, which he handed to Fred.

Fred struck it and by the light of it Hopping caught a glimpse of Morris, as he sat at the table with his face so bruised and swollen he hardly knew him.

"How's this, Morris?" Hopping asked.

"We failed to disarm him, and he got the drop on me."

Fred chuckled and remarked:

"That's the whole story in a nutshell, and now we will get to business."

Just then the match went out and they were again in total darkness.

"We must have a light," said Terry, "but I'm blest if I know how we can get it."

"I'll go to the next house and get one," said Mike, the coachman, turning and leaving the house.

"Now, Terry," said Fred to his companion, "you keep your hand on Morris, and I'll hold on this brilliant light of villainy myself."

"Don't be so choice in your compliments," sneered Hopping. "You've got the upper hand of me just now, but there are others."

"I'm fully aware of that," returned Fred. "Perhaps we will get the others before we are through with this thing."

"Don't be too sure of that."

"Well, at any rate I'm sure of you. What have you done with that twenty thousand dollars you got on my check?"

An angry explosion followed the query, at which both Fred and Terry laughed heartily. Hopping was fully convinced he had been played by the youth most successfully, and the thought filled him with such wrath that he poured out a stream of vituperative denunciation upon him. When he stopped Fred suggested that he keep on, if it relieved him any, and he did keep on a while longer. By and by Mike returned with a candle, which he lighted and held up whilst Fred proceeded to search all the pockets of Hopping.

He found a number of letters and papers, and around his person a belt which contained money and bonds amounting to a large sum.

"Did you get these at Avon?" Fred asked him.

"No. They are mine honestly."

"Well, if that is true, they'll be returned to you honestly; but you'll have to prove that they are yours."

"No, I won't! You'll have to prove that they are not mine."

"Good," laughed Fred. "I believe you're right. But I'll turn them over to the sheriff, at Avon, and let the authorities there settle the question of ownership. Now, Mr. Hopping, who was in that carriage you left awhile ago?"

"I won't tell you anything at all, sir."

"Yes, you will," said Fred. "Mrs. Hopping was in there and had Judge Holman's child."

Hopping never flinched, but simply remarked:

"If you know so much about it, why do you ask so many questions?"

"Oh, I'm going to give you a chance to return that child, for you've got it to do or you don't leave this house alive."

"Oh, you be hanged! You can't frighten me with your threats."

"We'll see about that. That is a little three or four year old innocent. I'm determined to save the life of that child or else take yours. I overheard you and your pals in your room plotting to get him, to hold him for a big ransom. It's the little Charley Ross game over again. Little Charley was murdered by his kidnappers, who were frightened by the tremendous upheaval of public indignation. I intend to balk this game and save that child at every hazard."

Hopping simply sneered at him.

"Oh, you may sneer," returned Fred, "but it was written two thousand years ago, that all a man hath will he give for his life. Now you don't think that I have the nerve to kill a man. You seem to forget that I once peppered you with bird shot and two others. I would have aimed just as straight then had the gun been loaded with buckshot."

While he was talking Fred quietly drew a knife from his pocket and opened it.

"Now I'm going to push this knife slowly right into you, just over your heart. Just to give you a chance to weaken. When it has gone far enough you can stop me by giving up the child, telling me exactly where it is, where your wife has taken it, and where we can find it."

And with this he began pushing the point of the blade against Hopping's breast.

The prisoner's feet being untied, he sprang back against the wall and raised one foot, hissing as he did so:

"Stand back now!"

"Mike!" called Fred to the coachman, "tie his feet."

"All right, boss," said Mike, grabbing the prisoner and hurling him to the floor with great violence. Fred

assisted him, and although Hopping kicked like a mule, struggling desperately, he was soon bound helpless as an infant. Then Fred sat astride of him and again applied the point of his blade, with the remark:

"I'll give you a chance. I'll push it in slowly, but by all that is holy in Heaven or earth you'll get every inch of it if you don't give up that child!" and he began pushing it till it penetrated the coat, vest and shirt. When it struck the flesh Hopping squirmed, but Fred pushed it steadily a full half inch further, whereupon Hopping let out a yell:

"Enough! You are an infernal lunatic!"

"All right," said Fred. "If I have to kill you, I won't plead insanity, but simply justification. Where is the child?"

"At a house seven miles up the road."

"You'd better tell the truth about it," said Fred.

"That is the place we agreed to take it to."

"Very well, you will go there with us," and Fred rose to his feet and told Mike to go and get his carriage.

Mike hurried away, and while waiting for Fred, instructed Terry to run up to the next house and tell the farmer what was going on there, and ask for a wagon with which to carry Morris back to town. Terry hurried back up the road, a distance of an eighth of a mile. He was gone nearly an hour, during which time Mike was engaged in lifting Hopping up and conveying him out to the carriage. When Terry returned he had a wagon, and was accompanied by an old farmer and his two sons.

CHAPTER IX.

A DESPERATE GAME SUCCESSFULLY BALKED.

IN as few words as possible Fred explained to the farmer the situation, and asked him to take the prisoner to town and turn him over to the authorities, whilst he and Terry would take the other prisoner along with them, in pursuit of his wife and the child.

"All right," said the farmer. "I'll deliver them dead or alive."

"Deliver them alive," said Fred, "if you can. Now, come on, Terry;" and he went out, entered the carriage, telling Hopping to give the right direction, or else he would be slain with as little compunction as one would destroy a rattlesnake.

Hopping told them to drive straight on about six miles, when they would find a little road turning to the right, which passed through a large area of woodland.

Mike drove away, whipping up his horses to a fast gait. They soon reached the road which turned into the woods and Mike stopped to inquire what sort of a road it was.

"It is rather a rough road," said Hopping, "but if you drive slowly you can get along without any trouble."

"Now, Mr. Hopping," said Fred, "there's somebody else here besides your wife, and if you give the alarm I'll just simply blow your brains out with this revolver. If you've agreed upon any signals, you must give them as though everything was all right. If you do not, and we are attacked, or they may make their escape to the woods, that ends everything with you right on the spot."

"I'll give it straight," said Hopping, "for the game is all up with me."

"You've got it down right," remarked Fred.

The carriage passed along slowly over the road, for it was very dark, until they heard a signal and the carriage stopped.

Hopping called out from the carriage :

"It's all right, Ed," and a minute or two later the man Hollis and Mrs. Hopping appeared at the carriage door.

"How in the world did you get away, John?" Mrs. Hopping asked.

Fred pushed open the door and stepped out, cocking his revolver, the click of which was plainly heard by Hollis, and said :

"You're a dead man if you move !"

The woman gave a scream and darted away towards a little hut, dimly visible from where the carriage stood. Quick as a flash Mike sprang from his seat, darted after her, caught her round the waist, and held her. Terry leaped out and also presented a revolver at Hollis' head.

"Disarm him, Terry," said Fred, and that duty was quickly performed.

"It's all up with us, Ed," said Hopping, still retaining his seat in the carriage.

Without a word, the man Hollis suddenly stooped low and darted across the road in the darkness.

Crack ! went Fred's revolver, followed by three more shots in rapid succession.

For a few seconds they heard him crashing through the bushes.

"By George, Terry," said Fred, "he got away."

"Yes," assented Terry, "but we've had luck enough anyway to let him go."

"Oh, I wanted to catch the whole gang," said Fred, in a rather regretful tone of voice.

"John, where are you?" called Mrs. Hopping, some eight or ten paces away from the carriage, where Mike was holding her.

"I'm here in the carriage, Nell, bound hand and foot."

"Where is Morris?" she asked.

"He is a prisoner, too."

"Where is that child, Mrs. Hopping?" Fred asked.

"He's in the hut, asleep," she replied. "Who are you?"

"Oh, I'm the redheaded Harris."

"What !" she fairly gasped.

"Yes, your husband and Morris and Hollis held me up and made me sign that check, but I was lucky enough to get the drop on Morris after they left.

What a pity it is that a woman of your education and accomplishments should be in league with such a lot of villains."

She made no reply, and Fred said to Mike :

"Bring her along to the hut, and let her show us where the child is."

"Oh, you'll find him in the corner, in there, lying on a bed of leaves," said the woman.

Fred pushed open the door and struck a match, by the light of which he beheld a sight that almost melted him to tears. In a corner of the room, on a rude bed of leaves, lay the little flaxen-haired fellow, as quiet as though dead, or asleep. The light went out and he stooped over and lifted the little child in his arms. He pressed him firmly to his breast and came out into the starlight.

"Is he asleep, or have you drugged him?" he asked the woman.

"He is simply asleep," she said.

"Very well, then, we won't awake him. Mike, turn your carriage around and we'll go back to town."

"Somebody must hold her, sir," said Mike, "or she'll skip away as the other one did."

"I'll hold her," said Terry, coming up to her and catching her around the waist.

Mike lost no time in turning the carriage around, whilst Fred stood waiting with the sleeping child in his arms. As Terry held the woman, she placed her arms around his neck, kissed him, and whispered :

"Oh, let me go ! let me go !"

"Impossible," said Terry. "You have committed a crime which no woman could do, except one with the heart of a fiend."

"No, no," she sobbed. "It was not me. It was not me. They forced me to help them."

"That may be so, madam, and if you can prove that the law will not harm you."

She pleaded piteously, until Terry's heart was touched, but he would not let her go.

"Come, Mrs. Hopping," said Fred ; "we'll go back to the city now. Get in here and take the front seat."

Terry assisted her in. She threw her arms around the neck of her husband, crying piteously :

"Oh, John, we are ruined !"

"Well, it can't be helped, Nell," said he.

Terry entered the carriage and took a seat by her side. He found her trying to untie the cord that bound Hopping's hands.

"Now, madam, that won't do," he said. "Stop that or we'll have to tie you, too."

"Oh, I'll be good," she cried, sitting up straight on the seat.

"Well, you must," said Terry, "for I should dislike very much to have to be rude or rough with you."

Fred then entered and sat by the side of Hopping, holding the child in his arms. Mike shut the door and mounted to his seat and drove away slowly and cautiously, until they reached the main road. Then he whipped up his horses and drove rapidly towards the city. When within two or three miles of the out-

skirts of the town they met a party of a dozen men on horseback.

"Halt!" cried one of the horsemen, and Mike reined up, calling out:

"What's the matter?"

"We are looking for those kidnappers; have you seen anything of them?" replied the horseman.

"Yes, sir," returned Mike, "we've got them inside here."

"Have you got the child?"

"You bet we have!"

"Thank God for that!" cried a man in the party, leaping from his horse and running to the side of the carriage, where he pulled open the door and gasped out:

"Is my child safe?"

"Yes," said Fred. "Are you the father?"

"Yes," he replied.

"Well, here is your child," and Fred held the sleeping little fellow out to him, and the next moment it was clasped in his arms.

By this time every horseman had dismounted and crowded around the carriage.

"Where are the villains?" several of them cried.

"We have the leader of the gang in here," said Fred. "One got away and another we sent to town, bound hand and foot."

"Lynch him! Lynch him!" cried several voices, and the door on the other side of the carriage was opened and Hopping was dragged out. Being bound hand and foot, he fell in a heap on the ground. At the same moment another party of upwards of a score rode up, and they too joined in the cry to lynch him.

Mrs. Hopping began to scream. Fred sprang out of the carriage and called out:

"Gentlemen, these are my prisoners. By the aid of a friend I balked a game, captured three of them and rescued the child."

"Who are you?" someone asked.

"My name is Fred Fearnot. I pursued that man from Avon, where I was a student of the academy, and while trying to catch him, found that he was the head of a gang plotting to kidnap the Holman child. I played a deep game to catch as many of the gang as possible and succeeded pretty well. Now, I don't want you to take him away from me. He is my prisoner and I want to turn him over to the sheriff at Elmira, with the proof to convict him not only of kidnapping, but of looting the Bank of Avon also."

"Lynch him! Lynch him!" cried several voices in the crowd. "Get a rope. Let's hang him at once."

"No, no," said Fred. "That is in violation of law. This is not a Wild West, where lynching is justifiable. There isn't a man among you who can say that the law in Elmira will not punish a man for a crime like his."

"What's the use of waiting for the law? He has no right to live a day longer."

"That may be true," replied Fred; "but you have no right to take the law in your own hands, and thus

place yourselves upon the same level with him as violators of law."

Notwithstanding his argument, several of them seized Hopping and dragged him to his feet.

"Now, gentlemen," cried Fred, in a very determined tone of voice, "I have a revolver with six bullets in it, and I'll empty it into the crowd of you if you attempt to lynch him."

"Here's another one!" said Terry, ranging alongside of Fred and drawing his revolver, "and that makes a dozen."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen!" called out Judge Holman, as he held the child in his arms, "the boys are right; we must uphold the law, and I, the father, who has suffered most, beg you to desist. There is no possible chance for them to escape, so let us take the prisoner to the jail and see that the law is vindicated."

The judge's appeal had its effect. They cut the thongs loose that bound Hopping's feet and placed him on the horse that had been ridden by the judge. The latter took his seat in the carriage opposite Mrs. Hopping, and together the entire party started on back towards the city.

Relieved of the presence of her husband, Mrs. Hopping made a pitiful appeal to the judge for mercy, telling him that when she married Hopping she loved him with all the strength of her heart and soul, thinking him an honest, respectable man. By degrees he had controlled her and won her to participate with him in his evil doings. She had been influenced by him to assist in the kidnapping of the child, and claimed that she had intended to treat it with all the tenderness of a mother until a ransom had been paid for it; that if she was not prosecuted she would tell everything she knew, get a divorce from her husband and live an honest, respectable life the rest of her days.

"Madam," said Judge Holman, "all that matter rests with the officer of the court, the district attorney. I have no power to make any promises. If you tell your story to the district attorney he may believe it and let you go. It rests entirely with him."

His words reassured her somewhat, and she ceased her sobbing.

When they reached the city Fred found everybody intensely excited. The carriage drove up to the hotel, where the street in front of the house was packed with two or three thousand people. The mother of the child had been assured by messenger that her darling was safe. As the judge ascended the stairs, with the child in his arms, she ran to meet him, screaming with joy. Police had to surround the carriage to prevent the mob from killing the prisoner on the spot.

"Where are the boys who captured them?" many in the crowd called out.

"There they are," replied Mike, pointing to Fred and Terry, with his whip, as they alighted from the carriage.

The two boys were instantly seized and raised to the shoulders of stalwart men, and the air filled with

cheers from the multitude. Fred and Terry were borne into the hotel, into which the crowd surged until the main office was jammed like sardines in a box.

The clerk and proprietor of the house were astounded when they recognized the two boys as two very quiet guests, of whom they had not taken hitherto any particular notice. In the meantime the police had taken Hopping and his wife to the jail, where they were locked in separate cells. The woman was so utterly overcome with fear, she was scarcely able to walk from the carriage up the stairs to the office of the jailer. Hopping tried to speak with her, but was not permitted to do so. Of course nearly half the crowd followed the carriage to the jail, and there Mike, the coachman, as he sat on his seat, related the part he had played in the game, with a great deal of satisfaction to himself, as well as of interest to his listeners.

"I'll tell you what, boys!" he exclaimed, "that redheaded chap, called Fred, is the gamest one I ever saw or heard of. He forced the leader of the gang to tell where the child was by sticking his knife into him right over his heart, swearing he'd cut his heart in two if he didn't out with it; and blast my eyes if he didn't make the villain weaken and own up to the whole business."

It was an astonishing revelation to the crowd, for it was a proceeding not sanctioned by law, yet justified by the necessities of the situation. It struck the popular heart and the mob went roaring along the streets, in the direction of the hotel, carrying with them the strange story the coachman had told. When they repeated it to the crowd in front of the hotel, the enthusiasm reached such a pitch that men grew frantic with cheering for the name of the daring youth who had proved himself equal to the emergency. When the news got inside, where the crowd was still holding Fred and Terry, some one put the question to them of the truth of the story told by Mike.

"It is true," said Fred. "I believed the child's life was in danger, and I made up my mind to save it, even if I had to deliberately take the life of the villain."

"Would you have killed him?" a voice asked in the crowd.

"Oh, well now," laughed Fred, "I'm not giving myself away just now."

The crowd roared and cheered, whilst scores of men in the barroom, connected with the house, drank themselves drunk on toasts to his health and prosperity. They insisted on a speech from Fred.

"Oh, no," he laughed; "you want to make me blow my own horn, but I won't do it."

"We'll blow it for you!" called out a voice in the crowd.

"Blow away as much as you please," he laughed.

"I'm a poor hand at that sort of thing myself."

They kept firing questions at him, however, until they made him tell who he was, where he was from, and how he happened to be playing detective while he was yet a youth of but eighteen. He answered

every question good-naturedly, and finally took the red wig from his head, with the remark:

"This is what fooled 'em. I was a good-looking boy before I came here, but I had to get up a disguise of some kind, so I went around to a costumer on Main street, who made a complete change in my appearance, by utterly spoiling my beauty. He cropped my hair close, fitted this red wig on my head, and then covered my face with freckles till I had to be introduced to myself before I knew who I was."

"Oh, you may laugh," he continued, as the crowd roared and cheered, "but I daren't go home till these freckles wear off, for my mother would never own up to having a speckled kid. As for my best girl, well, she would walk off with the other fellow."

"Plenty of girls here who'll have you!" sang out a voice in the crowd, and thus the fun went on for upwards of an hour.

Of course Terry came in for his share of praise and commendation, but it was not until long after midnight that they were permitted to retire to their rooms. When they awoke and came down the next morning they found themselves famous, for the papers were filled with sensational accounts of how he had balked the great game of the kidnappers. As soon as he could do so Fred hurried around to the telegraph office, where he sent a message to the sheriff at Avon.

"I have got them both, with part of the money and bonds. Come on at once. (Signed) FRED."

On returning to the hotel he found Judge Holman waiting for him.

"See here, my boy," exclaimed the judge, grasping his hand, "Mrs. Holman wants to see you. Come upstairs with me."

"I haven't had my breakfast yet, judge," he laughed.

"Neither have we. We will breakfast together. Your friend Olcott is with her now."

He went up with the judge to the ladies' parlor, where, the moment the judge's wife saw him, she clasped him in her arms and covered his face with kisses, while showering blessings upon his head. Her demonstrations of gratitude were so fervent that Fred became embarrassed and tried to get away.

"I forgot to ask you last night," said the judge, "about the nurse. Did you see anything of her?"

"No, sir," replied Fred, "but I heard that she went away in the carriage with the woman."

"They must have drugged her and dropped her out somewhere," the judge remarked, "and I'll set detectives looking for her."

A few minutes later Fred and Terry went down to breakfast with Judge Holman and his wife, the latter leading the child by the hand. While they were at breakfast one of the waiters laid a little slip of paper before the judge, who put on his glasses and read it. He looked at his wife and said:

"The nurse has just come in."

"Oh, I am so glad!" she exclaimed. "She can

probably tell us how she came to let them get possession of our little darling."

"Oh, as for that," returned her husband, "I think you will find that she simply accepted an invitation from the woman to take a ride with her about the city. They probably drugged her or chloroformed her, and left her somewhere to come to when the effect of the drug should wear off. I don't think she was in any way to blame, and I hope you will not scold her."

"Oh, of course not; I couldn't think of such a thing," responded his wife.

During the day Fred and Terry were made recipients of many congratulations from hundreds of people, and they had more questions to answer than ever fell to the lot of two boys before. In the middle of the afternoon the sheriff from Avon came in. He shook hands with them both, and told them that when they returned the whole town would meet them at the depot with carriages and a brass band.

"Oh, well," said Fred, "I guess I won't go back there then."

"You'll miss a deal of fun if you don't," returned the sheriff.

"Well, as for fun," laughed Fred, "I think I've had enough the last week to do me for some time to come. Did you see Mr. Cushman?"

"Yes, he's coming on the next train to see if any of the property you recovered belonged to his bank. What have you done with it?"

"The belt is here in the safe of the hotel."

"All right, then," said the sheriff; "when Mr. Cushman arrives we'll let him look at it."

Two hours later, Cushman, the president of the Bank of Avon, reached the hotel. He grasped Fred's hand, congratulated him, saying that he had performed the finest detective feat of the whole year.

"Oh, I was bound to catch them," laughed Fred, "because one of them had threatened to lay for me the night I passed them in front of the bank, and I made up my mind to lay for him, and I did."

While he was talking to the president of the bank, a telegram was placed in his hands by a messenger from the telegraph office. He tore it open and read:

"What's this I hear? Have you left school and turned detective? Wire particulars.

(Signed) "FATHER."

Fred laughed and handed the dispatch to Mr. Cushman to read, with the remark:

"Excuse me, please, till I answer it."

"Of course," said the banker, and Fred turned to the first desk and wrote out on a telegraphic blank:

"It's only a lark for the fun that was in it."

(Signed) "FRED."

That done, he turned again to the banker, with the remark that he was ready to let him inspect the belt taken from Hopping. The proprietor of the hotel invited them into his private office, where the belt was brought and opened.

"These are our bonds," said Cushman, as soon as

he saw them, "for here is the memoranda of their numbers," and he produced a slip of paper in proof of his statement. "This is only about one-fourth of the money, though, that I suppose has been divided up among the gang."

"Well," said Fred, "I never thought of searching the man, Morris, for a belt. He may have one on him yet, and the woman, too."

The other two prisoners were afterward searched and a large sum of money found on each, which was turned over to Cushman.

"Now, my boy," said Cushman to Fred, when he returned to the hotel, "I offered the sheriff ten thousand dollars for the capture and conviction of the robbers of our bank. You have captured them, but it is quite certain they will be tried first for the kidnapping of that child, and on conviction will be sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. That, of course, will make it impossible for them to be tried in Avon for the robbery of the bank, so we won't wait for that, but will turn the reward over to the sheriff, for him to divide as he thinks best under the circumstances."

"All right, sir," said Fred. "Fix it to suit yourself; but I want Terry here to come in for as much as I do, for I don't think that I could have succeeded as well as I did had he not joined me."

Mr. Cushman gave the sheriff his check for ten thousand dollars and had it cashed at the Bank of Elmira.

"Now I'll tell you what I'm going to do, boys," said the sheriff. "There were four of us who went with you to Dupont the next day after the robbery and worked up the case from that point. I will take out five hundred dollars each for our share, and turn the balance over for you two to divide between yourselves," and he did so.

Fred and Terry then divided it equally between themselves, each getting the sum of four thousand dollars in cold cash.

"Great Scott, Fred!" exclaimed Terry. "We've struck it rich, haven't we?"

"You bet we have," laughed Fred, "to say nothing of the fun we had."

"What are you going to do now?" Terry asked.

"Oh, I'm going to buy some clothes and knock around until these freckles wear off from my face, and then run down to New York to give the old man a chance to pat me on the back and call me a good boy. Can't you go with me?"

"Blest if I don't!" said Terry; "but my old man is going to kick about my leaving school."

"Oh, well," laughed Fred, "send him a thousand dollars and tell him you'll be good."

CHAPTER X.

THE SURPRISE OF THE HALL BOYS AND THE CANDIDATE FOR OFFICE.

BEING now well supplied with cash, Fred and Terry decided not to return to the academy at Avon, on account of the term being within ten days of ending.

Besides, Fred didn't care to return with the freckles on his face, which nothing but the hand of time could remove.

"Say, Fred," laughed Terry, "what a lot of fun we could have with the boys if you went back with that red top-knot and your speckled physiognomy!"

"You bet we would," replied Fred. "They'd yell at me and follow me around wherever I went. I wouldn't stand the racket for a thousand dollars. The fact is, I don't believe the professor would let me in."

"You bet your life he would, for he's a friend of yours from away back; and so are his wife and daughter."

"Yes, I believe they are, but I don't think Miss Eunice could stand it. She would laugh herself sick every time she looked at me."

"I believe she would," assented Terry. "Still, for all that, she would be as sweet on you as ever."

"Oh, she was never sweet on me."

"Bah! Every boy in school knows that she is; and as for Charcoal and Teddy, they'd shuck their coats and fight for you every day in the week, including Sundays."

"I won that coon the first day I landed there, by giving him a dollar for carrying my baggage up to my room."

"Oh, that's the way you did it, eh?"

"Yes, you may flatter a coon to the full limit of the English language, but a silver dollar will beat it every time."

"Is that why he said you knew more than even the teachers did?"

"No, I guess not," laughed Fred. "I explained a thing to him that he didn't know before."

"What was it?"

"Oh, I don't remember all I told him, except one thing, and that was when he kicked on my calling him Charcoal; I told him that the first people who were created were called by their colors; that the blacks were called 'charcoal,' and the whites 'chalk,' but that the Hebrew for chalk was Adam, and that they went by those names for several thousand years, until there were so many they had to have other names, and that's how the old ones came to be lost."

"Well, I'll be hanged!" ejaculated Terry. "Where did you get on to that wrinkle?"

"Oh, I had it in my thinker, and during the first week or two I gave him a few more. I finally caught Teddy on the snake question."

"Yes, I recollect that," said Terry, "but I never did understand how you put up that job on him. What was it?"

"Oh, I dropped a snake in his pocket, and when he put his hand in there he yanked it out with a wild Irish whoop, and dived down into his quarters with the cold shivers dancing up and down his spinal column."

"But where in thunder did you get that snake?"

"Oh, I had it in my pocket."

"Ah, get out!"

"It's a fact," asserted Fred. "I had more fun with that snake than you could have with a live monkey."

"Ah, don't give me such stuff as that, Fred. I won't have it."

"Well, I'll show you the very snake," said Fred. "Come up in my room. I keep him in a little box in my trunk."

"All right! I want to see that reptile."

And as they were going up the stairs Fred deftly dropped a little gelatine snake into Terry's coat pocket.

When they reached Fred's door, the latter was adjusting the key in the lock, and Terry put his hand into his pocket for his handkerchief. He jerked it out with an exclamation that might have been heard in every room on the floor. At the same time the little gelatine serpent dropped to the floor and began to uncoil. Fred saw it, and darted away, singing out:

"Look out! Look out!" and Terry darted away clear back to the head of the flight of stairs.

Fred picked up the snake and restored it to his pocket unperceived by Terry, after which he joined him, with the remark:

"Hanged if he hasn't got away, somehow; and if he gets into some of the rooms where there are women you'll hear the liveliest circus ever heard in this town."

"Confound you!" blurted Terry. "What in thunder are you carrying such things around with you for?"

"Why, just to see fools like you jump," returned Fred.

"Wouldn't anybody but a fool jump if he found a snake in his pocket?"

"That depends," laughed Fred.

"Depends on what?"

"Whether it's a real live snake, or one like this," and he took the little fake serpent out of his pocket and held it out towards Terry, who caught his breath and leaped back when he saw it.

"What in thunder are you afraid of?" Fred laughed, and he coiled the snake up in his hand again. "That's one on you."

"One?" laughed Terry, "it's a dozen. Let me see it;" and he reached out and took hold of it, examining it carefully for several minutes.

"Well, it's a good one," he said. "Where did you get it?"

"Down in New York."

"Let me have it, please? I want to put it in Mike, the coachman's, pocket the next time I meet him."

"You want to look out for Mike," remarked Fred.

"I don't think he can stand a joke like that. He might wipe up the sidewalk with you. Play it on one of the hall boys downstairs."

"All right, I will. Come ahead," and they started to go down the stairs, when Fred stopped him to show him how to place it in his pocket coiled up, so that when one reached in and took it out it would begin to uncoil in his hand as though it were alive.

"All right," said Terry. "Come ahead," and they went downstairs, where there were four or five hall boys sitting or standing around, waiting to be called by the clerk or proprietor when needed.

One of them was a lively kid about fourteen, and Terry deftly dropped it into his pocket as he passed him. About five minutes later they heard the boy give a gasp as he yanked the snake out of his pocket and threw it into the face of one of the others, causing him to go backwards over a chair with a yell that nearly raised the roof. Both Fred and Terry rushed forward and lifted the boys up, and at the same time the former quietly pocketed the snake. The proprietor and clerk rushed around to know what had happened, and had to collar the boy who got the snake in the face, to prevent him from striking the other, who threw it.

"What's the matter with you?" the proprietor asked.

"Why, Tommy threw a snake in my face, and I'll lick him if I die for it."

"Threw a snake in your face?" exclaimed the astonished proprietor.

"I didn't mean to do it," said Tommy, who was shaking like a leaf. "I put my hand in my pocket and felt something in there; but I didn't know what it was; and when I jerked it out it landed on Bill's face."

"Where is that snake?" the proprietor asked. "There are no snakes around here."

But all four of the boys insisted that it was a snake, and Terry and Fred corroborated them. Whereupon the proprietor set all of them to work, hunting around to find the serpent; but at the end of about fifteen or twenty minutes he came to the conclusion that it had gotten away completely.

Tommy, who found it in his pocket, was very pale for an hour.

"Say, Fred," whispered Terry, "did you get it?"

"Yes," was the reply, "but we don't want to drop it around here again, for the proprietor won't stand it."

"Well, let's play it somewhere else then."

"All right. Come into the barroom."

They went into the barroom attached to the hotel, and found about a dozen people in there, drinking and talking politics. One of them was a candidate, and he was treating for votes. He had been drinking so much himself, however, he was scarcely able to keep on his feet. He had a glass of whisky standing in front of him, while he was talking to two other men who were but a little soberer than he was. By and by, Fred watched his opportunity to drop the coil over the glass of the candidate, just as he was turning around to take it up to empty it. He saw the little serpent uncoiling from around his glass, and a look of horror came into his face. His two friends also saw it at the same time.

"Boys," he gasped. "I've got 'em. For God's sake take me home!"

"I've got them, too!" exclaimed each of the other

two, staggering away from the bar, followed by the candidate, who never touched a drop of his half filled glass of whisky.

Fred deftly yanked it off and restored it to his pocket. The candidate dropped into a seat, near a table, his eyes bulging and hair standing on end.

"Look at Mathers," said some one in the room. "What's the matter with him?" and a half dozen instantly surrounded the candidate, who gasped out:

"I've got 'em, boys! The snakes are after me!"

"Hello!" exclaimed one in the party. "Blest if it isn't a case of jim jams. Get a carriage and let's take him home, quick."

Some one summoned a carriage and the candidate was led out to it and hurried away to his home, accompanied by two of his friends, who were anxious to keep the fact concealed from the public. It got out, however, and he was badly beaten at the polls a week or two later, by the votes of men who didn't wish to have an official who was liable to have the delirium tremens.

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION.

WHEN Fred restored the little gelatine serpent to his pocket he slipped out of the barroom, and Terry followed him. Out on the street he remarked:

"That was a dangerous piece of business, Terry."

"Where was the danger?" Terry asked.

"Why, that fellow thought he had the jim jams, and his eyes bulged until they stood out on his cheeks. If he had tumbled to the trick he would have wiped up the floor with me."

"I never thought of that," laughed Terry.

"Well, I didn't, either. It won't do to play tricks on men when they are drinking, anyway, and I won't try it again. Let's hunt up Mike and take a ride around town with him."

"That suits me," said Terry, and they went out on the corner below, where Mike usually kept his carriage lying in wait for fares. They found him sitting up on his seat half asleep.

"Put the snake on him," said Terry.

"Not on your life," replied Fred. "He'd jump clear over on his horses and they'd run away and smash his carriage to pieces, if they didn't kill him. Hello, Mike!"

Mike suddenly woke up and saw the redheaded youth, whom he greeted with great cordiality.

"We want to ride around town awhile, Mike," said Fred.

"All right, boss. Get in."

The two boys took seats in the carriage, and Mike asked them where they wished to go.

"Anywhere you please. Just show us around town; and if you can take us where we can have any fun, do so."

Mike mounted his seat and drove them around

town for about five hours, after which he returned to the hotel with them.

"How much money do you want, Mike?" asked Fred, when they alighted from the carriage.

"Five dollars, boss," he answered.

"Why, you must be working for your health, Mike. You'd starve to death on such wages as that," and the two boys handed him each a ten dollar bill.

"We owe you something, old man," said Fred, "for helping us out the other day. We'll take a ride with you again some day."

"All right, boss," he grinned. "I'd rather drive you than the President of the United States; and if you want me again in a scrimmage, just let me know and I'll stay with you till the sun goes down on the last day."

"All right, old man," replied Fred. "We won't ride in any other carriage but yours while we stay in Elmira."

That evening Judge Holman invited them into his private parlor and insisted that they should permit him to give each one of them a token of the appreciation of himself and his wife of the great service they both had rendered. "I want to present each of you," he added, "with a fine gold watch."

"Now look here, judge," said Fred, "I already have a fine watch that was presented to me by the senior class of the girls' High School at Avon. Hence another watch would be of no use to me whatever. The truth is, neither of us need anything at all."

"Oh, I'm aware of that," returned the judge; "but I assure you it would be a great satisfaction to Mrs. Holman and myself to have you accept something that you can always keep with you in remembrance of our gratitude."

"Oh, I know what I will give them!" exclaimed Mrs. Holman, drawing two splendid diamond rings from the finger of her left hand, which she fitted upon the fingers of both Fred and Terry. They were beautiful, sparkling gems.

"Now, look here, my dear boys," she said. "I want you to wear these rings until you grow up to man's estate, and marry the girl of your choice. Then you must place them upon the finger of your wife, and tell her how you came by it."

"That's it! That's it!" said the judge. "Sweet memories will ever cluster around the gem after that."

"Now, boys, will you do just as I say?" Mrs. Holman insisted.

They both laughed and said they would.

"Then I shall be satisfied," she remarked. "But you must further promise that when either of you marry you must invite us to be present at the wedding."

"All right," laughed Fred. "I'll be sure to let you know."

"We will both be sure to be there," returned Mrs. Holman, "to kiss the bride and tell her what a prize has captured."

"That'll be fine," laughed Fred, and thus they spent a pleasant evening in the private parlor of the Holmans, where refreshments were served and many pleasant stories told by both the boys and the judge.

A day or two later Fred observed that the freckles were gradually leaving his face, and he remarked to Terry that he would soon be able to look like his old former self. That morning when he went down to the main office of the hotel, he was astounded at seeing his father's name on the register, in his familiar handwriting.

"Great Scott!" he gasped; "the old man is here!"

"What are you going to do?" Terry asked; "skip out?"

"No; that wouldn't do. He's a good father, and I've done nothing to run away for that I know of. He might give me a little lecture, though, about my leaving the academy before the end of the term. I'll tell you what I am going to do, though. I'm going to put on the red wig and go up to his room just as soon as he arises."

"What time does he get up?" Terry asked.

"About eight o'clock, and he's as regular as a clock, too."

They waited until eight o'clock and then went up to Fred's room, where he put on the red wig again and together the two repaired to his father's room where Fred knocked on the door.

They heard the judge dressing, and also his cheerful:

"Come in."

Fred turned the bolt and walked in.

"Hello, father!" he greeted. Judge Fearnot turned and looked at him with an expression of puzzled astonishment on his face for nearly a minute, without uttering a word. Then he asked:

"Is that you, Fred?"

"Yes, father. This is my detective make-up; and this is my classmate, Terry Olcott."

The judge reached out and shook Terry's hand, when Fred remarked:

"You haven't shaken hands with me yet, father."

"Excuse me," said the judge, extending his hand. "I was so much astonished I forgot to."

"I hope you're not angry with me, father."

"Oh, no," was the reply. "The papers have been saying such nice things about you that I really haven't the heart to scold you. If my memory doesn't fail me, I was once a boy myself."

"Yes," laughed Fred, "and I'll bet you were one of the boys, too. Now tell me how mother was when you left her."

"She was very well indeed and anxious to see you. It would never do, though, for her to see you in that shape, as it would give her a shock she could never get over."

Fred laughed and pulled the wig off of his head.

"How did you get those freckles?" his father asked.

"I had a costumer put them on with a species of dye which can't be washed off; but he told me they would disappear in a week or so, and I am waiting for them to fade out before I go home."

The judge laughed heartily and thought it a very amusing state of affairs. A little later he asked Fred if he needed any money.

"Oh, no," answered Fred. "We have been pretty well rewarded for capturing those villains, so I guess I won't have to call on you for any money for some time to come."

"All right. Glad to hear that. I hope you won't be extravagant."

"Not a bit more than usual, father. You know I don't drink or gamble; but I want to run up to Terry's home with him, spend a little while there after these freckles fade away, and then I'll go down to see mother. But what brought you up here, father?"

"I came up to look after you. I was a bit worried about what I had read in the paper, and wanted to see for myself if it was all true."

"Well, you know how it is about the papers, father. Still, for all that, I'm glad you came. Judge Holman and his wife are still here, and I would be glad to have you meet them."

They waited for the judge to finish dressing, and went down to the breakfast-room with him. As they entered they saw the Holmans at their table, and the lady beckoned to them to come to her. They did so, and Fred introduced his father to the judge and his wife, both of whom greeted him with the greatest cordiality. They sat down at the same table with them, where Fred and Terry had to listen to the judge's wife's fulsome eulogies of themselves. Of course Fred's father's face showed the gratification he felt, which fact made Fred feel very happy.

"Say, my boy," said Fred's father to him, "how do you manage to stand so much praise, without having your head swelled?"

"Oh, that's easy," laughed Fred. "I am the son of my father, you know."

"Good! Good!" laughed Judge Holman. "That's a fine one!"

"Oh, the boy is a good one at that sort of talk," laughed the elder Fearnot, "but I never knew him to give me one like that before."

Fred's father spent two or three days in Elmira, during which time he and Terry enjoyed themselves, going and coming at will, and devoting themselves to the entertainment of the old man in the evening with the Holmans in their private parlor. Then he returned to the city, leaving the boys to enjoy their vacation as they saw fit, until such time as he thought Fred should return to his home.

The day after he returned to New York, the Holmans left for their home in Schenectady, after extending an earnest invitation to the two boys to visit them there.

By that time the freckles had pretty well disappeared from Fred's face and he was once more his

old self. They visited every place of amusement in town, and otherwise enjoyed themselves.

After the departure of the Holmans, they went to a theater at night, and on their way back to the hotel concluded to take in a part of the town where lived a good deal of the rough population, and found, down on a side street, an entertainment going on, with a great many rough characters present.

"It's a pretty tough place, Terry," remarked Fred; "but we'll take it in and see what it is."

"All right. I'm with you," said Terry, and the two paid their admission and went in.

It was simply a variety performance, somewhat on the negro minstrel order. The audience was extremely hilarious, for beer circulated continuously during the performance. Several rough fellows noticed the two well dressed youths in the crowd, and judged from the handsome diamond rings they wore they must be very well supplied with money.

When the performance was over with, the two boys started out to return to their hotel, and on passing through an unfrequented street they were confronted by a rough-looking man, who presented a revolver at Fred with the very terse order:

"Hold up your hands, or I'll blow your brains out!"

Quick as a flash a voice behind the rascal called out:

"You hold up yours, or I'll blow your brains out!"

The fellow wheeled around quickly to see the foe in his rear and the next moment Fred dealt him a blow on the back of the neck that sent him sprawling on the pavement. Fred leaped on his back with both feet, whilst Terry picked up his revolver.

"Now let him up, Fred," said Terry.

"Have you got his gun?" Fred asked.

"Yes."

"Well, let's march him to the police station then."

The man gradually pulled himself together and rose to his feet.

"Now see here," said Fred. "You've run up against a snag. You will go with us to the police station or eat lead. Take your choice."

"Blaze away," growled the man. "I won't go."

"Yes, you will," said Terry, catching hold of him. "You come along with me, and if you begin any of your monkey business you'll be shot."

The man turned and tripped Terry with his foot causing him to fall to the ground. The next moment he aimed a blow at Fred, but he sprang aside and escaped it. The man then darted away down the street as fast as his heels could take him.

Crack!

Terry fired at him when not more than ten paces distant, and the man plunged forward and fell heavily to the ground.

"Great Scott, Terry, you downed him!"

"Hope I haven't killed him!"

"Hadn't we better get away?" Fred asked.

"Oh, no; that wouldn't do. It would result in our

arrest. Some people are coming now," and as he spoke Fred went forward to where the man lay, reaching him about the same time that two others did who had run up on hearing the shot.

"What's the matter? What happened?" one of the newcomers asked excitedly.

"This man held us up," explained Fred, "but when he found it wouldn't go he tried to get away, and I fired at him."

He had scarcely finished the explanation, when a policeman came running up and arrested all four.

"No need of arresting these two," said Fred, pointing to the newcomers, "for they ran up after the shot was fired."

"Who fired the shot?" the officer asked.

"I did," replied Terry. "Here's the gun. You'd better take it."

"All right," replied the bluecoat, as he took the revolver. "What did you shoot him for?"

Fred explained how it occurred, and the officer remarked:

"Well, I don't blame you for that. But all the same you will have to go to the station with me."

"That's all right," returned Fred.

The officer stopped and turned the man over on his back and was astonished to find him very much alive, for he sat up, rubbed his head and began swearing like a pirate.

"Well," laughed Terry, "I'm glad I didn't kill him."

"You'd better attend to him, officer, and we'll go along with you."

The policeman took a pair of handcuffs from his

pockets and put them on the man's wrists, after which he pulled him to his feet and conducted him to the police station, whither quite a crowd followed him, gathering in numbers as they went along. At the station it was discovered that he wore a false beard and wig. The disguise was promptly removed, whereupon Fred exclaimed:

"Great Scott, it's Hollis!"

"Hanged if it isn't!" joined in Terry.

"Well, who's Hollis?" the police sergeant asked.

"Why, he's a member of Hopping's crowd of kidnappers. The one who got away from us the night we rescued Holman's child."

"Ah!" ejaculated the sergeant, "it's an important arrest. I won't hold you two young men. You can go to your hotel and return to the station to-morrow morning to tell the judge how the arrest came about."

They both thanked the sergeant and returned to the hotel.

The next day they appeared in the police court against Hollis and had the satisfaction of seeing him committed to jail along with Hopping and Morris.

Thus ends Fred Fearnot's adventures as a detective. He had captured the last one of the Hopping gang and now rested upon his laurels, after having baffled the most desperate game that had ever been played in the State.

The next number (3) of WORK AND WIN will contain the great story, "FRED FEARNOT'S DARING RESCUE; OR, A HERO IN SPITE OF HIMSELF," by author of "Fred Fearnot."

LETTERS FROM P. ADOLPHUS SWEETCAKE The Dude.

No. 2.

To the Editor of "WORK AND WIN."

You can imagine my pleasure when I weceived your vewy welcome lettah to the effect that my contwibutions to your papah would be accepted.

Weally, I felt twansported with joy.

I went to the fellahs who share my woom; as I told you in my last, out of motives of economy, five or six of us are obliged to sleep together, and three in a bed, you know, is deuced cwowed. Says I:

"Chappies, I have a wevelation to make to you."

"What is it?" asked Gussie. (Gussie is the best of the lot; everybody says that his demeanor behind the hosiery countah is too lady-like for anything.)

"I am about to leave," weplied I.

"Leave?"

"Yaas."

"Where—the establishment?"

I told him no.

Between you and I, I flattah myself that I contwibute not a little to the success of the establishment. I have fwequently observed that when I am pwesent, gwades are fully a dollah a day more than when I am nt.

"I mean to leave here," said I.

Gussie looked weproachfully at me.

"I hope you ain't mad, Dolphie," said he, "because I accidentally kicked you last night. It was done in a dweam. I dweamt that I was pursued by a fewocious canary. The dweam was howible; I can see the flaming eyes of that canary yet!"

"Not at all, Gussie," answered I; "but I have had a rise in the world. I have become a witah."

"A witah!" gasped Gussie.

"Yaas."

"One of those fellahs who—ah—scwibble for the papahs?"

"Yaas."

Gussie looked heart-bwoken.

"Old chappie," said he, "if you had gone to shoveling coal, or cawwyng bwicks, I would not have felt it so much. But to wite! Gweat Heavens! Tell me, was it poverty that forced the awful step? Why did not you tell me, Dolphie, that you were short. I have fully seventy-five cents saved up, and I am sure that I would have lent it to you with pleasure."

"Thanks, Gussie," said I, "but I have taken the fatal plunge into a litewary caweer. Although I feel degwaded in a social sense, yet we will not speak of that. Will you and the west of the boys come out and have a tweat?"

Gussie agweed.

So did the others.

We went out and had oystahs.

We got them at the cornah.

There is a weal enterpising fellah, who has a stand there, and he sells oystahs two for a cent, cwackers and lemon free. I prefer to go there wather than to a wegular saloon, because he opens the oystahs himself, wight in your pwesence, and you know just what you are buying.

We had a weal banquet.

It cost me eighteen cents.

Weally I ate two and a half oystahs myself, and I feel alarmed at my appetite. I am afwaid that I may have a tape-worm. Besides, I smuggled three cwackers into my pocket.

Three cwackers and a glass of watah make a delicious bwakfast; a nourishing but not a dyspeptic wepast.

Aftah our meal was concluded Fweddie Gohard exclaimed:

"Laddies, let's have some beer!"

We all looked amazed.

I thought that it was my place to wemonstrate, for I have noticed that of late Fweddie don't seem to care what he does at all. He appeahs to be bent upon throwing himself away. Weally, there is a wumor that he was seen to smoke a pipe, a howwid clay pipe, at midnight in a public stweet.

It is said that Fweddie has been cwossed in love.

I should not wonhah if the statement was twue, as for a long time Fweddie was awfully devoted to a little blonde in a fancy-store neah us.

They seemed so affectionate.

Why, every Saturday night—she got paid off Saturday night—they would go into one of the numerous summer gardens and sit there till the lights were put out, and the janitor came around with a club. They were vewy extwavagant, too. Some nights they would spend fully fifteen cents just for wefweshments.

All of a sudden, though, the little blonde shook Fweddie.

She got mawwied.

Yes, mawwied.

Mawwied to a howwid, vulgah fellah, who wore low collahs, and did not have the least degwee of taste about his neckties. Would you believe it, he wore a green necktie with a bwown suit—just think of it!

But I suppose the weason was that he was wich.

She—ah—went for boodle instead of fashion.

To weturn, though, to my wemonstrating with Fweddie.

"Beer, Fweddie," said I; "are you cwazy? You are well aware that you dwank only half a colt——"

"Pony, you mean, old chappie," cowwected Fweddie.

"Much thanks, old fellah. You dwank only half of a pony, and you became so intoxicated that it wequired the services of a seven-year-old newsboy to bwace you up on your way home. Why, Fweddie,

you were so full that you offered to knock out the newsboy, if he would tie one hand behind him."

"Pwobably I did," weplied Fweddie; "it is howwible. What a dare-devil I become when I am a little exhilarated. I guess that I won't ask you to have any beer. We will go to the neahest place of wefweshment and have a lemon-peel cocktail."

We went.

Did you ever have a lemon-peel cocktail?

If not, twy one.

They are gweat.

I know because I speak fwom expewience. Often have I swallowed fully three without expewiencing any evil effects.

The wecipe for them is vewy simple.

You take a glass of watah, limpid watah, put in a spoonful of sugah, and then add a lemon peel. The feature of the cocktail though, is to manipulate the lemon peel so that it will float upon the bwast of the watah.

I was sowwy aftahwards, that we accepted Fweddie's invitation.

His bibulation made him more weckless.

"Chappies, know where I'm going?" he inquired.

Fwankie Dobbs said that he didn't.

"To a ball," declared Fweddie.

"A ball!" ejaculated Fwankie.

"Yaas."

"What kind of a ball?"

Fweddie pulled out a ticket.

It wead as follows:

ANNUAL BALL OF THE HARDCRAB COTERIE

AT LETEMUPLIVELY HALL.

Tickets, One Case,

Admit Gent and Graft.

Fwankie nearly fainted.

"Where did you get that?" he asked.

"Off of one of the portahs," weturned Fweddie.

"That Iwish fellah with the wed mustache. He asked me as a favor to go, and I'm going. Who'll come along?"

Fwankie said he couldn't. He had to weturn home and sew a sole upon his shoe.

Gussie was forced to go to the house also. The fringe on the ends of his wed necktie had got mowed up, and he wanted to pick it stwaight with a pin.

All of the west of the fellahs also declined.

So he turned to me.

"I know that you will go, Dolphie," said he.

At first I meant to say no.

But I wemembered that I was a witah.

As a witah it is my duty to see life.

Therefore I consented.

The feahful events that came from my so doing I will tell you next week.

Yours, old fellah,

DOLPHIE

P.S.—You will notice that I sign myself Dolphie only. It seems to—ah—put me on a more fahmable footing with your weaders.

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